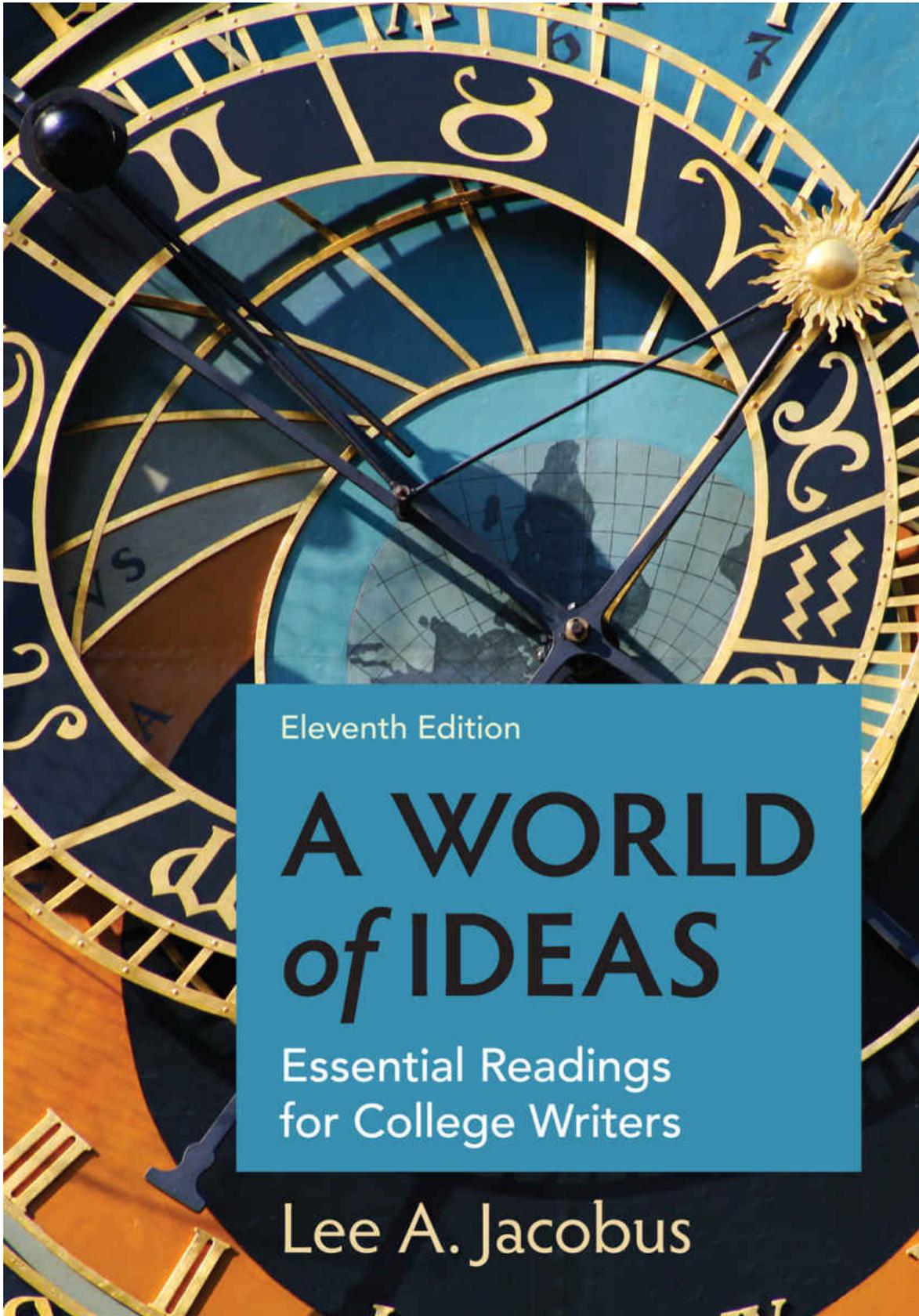


Eleventh Edition

A WORLD *of* IDEAS

Essential Readings
for College Writers

Lee A. Jacobus



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Description

The front cover

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ELEVENTH EDITION

A World of Ideas
**ESSENTIAL READINGS FOR
COLLEGE WRITERS**

LEE A. JACOBUS
University of Connecticut

 | bedford/st.martin's
Macmillan Learning
Boston | New York

For Bedford/St. Martin's

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For information, write: Bedford/St. Martin's, 75 Arlington Street,
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ISBN 978-1-319-21364-0 (mobi)

Acknowledgments

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Preface

A World of Ideas began as a disorganized group of selections for my 8 am English 101 course, which was populated by athletes, engineers, and a variety of students who had no idea what their majors would become. All of them, I felt, would benefit from having the opportunity to read serious thinkers addressing serious issues. I believe that we have all come to college to refine our thinking and to learn what has been thought and argued carefully by people who were deeply invested in the consequences of their work. The best way I knew to help students refine their thinking was, like the great writers they read, to work out through writing what their own understanding of the issues at stake was. My English 101 course, like all the writing courses I taught throughout my career, was aimed at helping students express themselves clearly. One obvious purpose was to make their ideas defined and intelligible to themselves. Another purpose was to make their ideas and beliefs intelligible to others. In some cases, as in discussions and arguments, the purpose was to help students write well enough that their views might inform the views of others.

In preparing the eleventh edition of *A World of Ideas*, I have benefited, as usual, from the suggestions of hundreds of users of earlier editions. The primary concern of both teachers and students is that the book remain centered on the tradition of important ideas and on the writers whose work has had a lasting influence on our society. From the first edition, I have chosen writers whose ideas are central to our most important and enduring concerns. A new edition offers the opportunity to

reevaluate old choices and make new ones that expand and deepen the fundamental purpose of this text: to support college students in writing courses as they engage with and respond to the rhetoric and ideas of writers who have shaped — and are still shaping — the way we think today.

The selections in this volume are of the highest quality. I selected each because it clarifies important ideas, sustains discussion, and stimulates good writing. Unlike most composition readers, *A World of Ideas* presents substantial excerpts from the work of each of its authors. I have presented the selection as they originally appeared; very rarely are they edited and marked with ellipses. They average ten to fifteen pages in length, and their arguments are presented completely, as the authors wrote them. However, the text supports students as they work with these selections, offering substantial headnotes to provide both historical and rhetorical context, prereading questions to help students focus, and helpful editorial gloss notes throughout. Developing ideas in writing takes patience, time, and a willingness to experiment. With *A World of Ideas*, students have the time and the support to read deeply into the work of important thinkers and grapple with their ideas because, ultimately, the knowledge yielded by the effort is vast and rewarding.

A Text for Readers and Writers

Because students perceive writers such as Plato and Butler as important, they take writing courses that use texts by these authors more seriously: they learn to read more attentively, think more critically, and write more effectively. I knew that, for many students, this may be their only opportunity to encounter the thinkers whose ideas influence our civilization. No other composition text offers a comparable collection of essential readings along with the supportive apparatus students need to understand, analyze, and respond to them.

ESSENTIAL CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY READINGS.

A World of Ideas draws its forty-nine selections from the writing of important thinkers, both those who shaped the ideas of our society and those who have caused us to rethink some of those same ideas today. Among them are Kwame Anthony Appiah, Aristotle, Francis Bacon, Simone de Beauvoir, Benazir Bhutto, Judith Butler, Andrew Carnegie, Charles Darwin, Frederick Douglass, Frantz Fanon, Sigmund Freud, Francis Fukuyama, Howard Gardner, F. A. Hayek, bell hooks, Thomas Jefferson, Carl Jung, Michio Kaku, Martin Luther King Jr., Niccolò Machiavelli, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jose Ortega y Gasset, Robert B. Reich, Marilynne Robinson, Adam Smith, Hsün Tzu, Cornel West, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Virginia Woolf.

A FOCUS ON SEVEN GREAT IDEAS.

The structure of *A World of Ideas* highlights concepts that are foundational to our culture, as developed by great thinkers throughout history, in order to capture the diversity of thought within these themes and to facilitate cross-disciplinary comparisons. Each of the seven parts of the book focuses on one essential idea — Government, Culture, Wealth, Education, Ethics, Gender, and Science. Part introductions ground students in the historical origins and development of each idea, connect the philosophies of individual writers, and offer questions prompting students to consider their own assumptions about each idea before they begin reading the selections.

“Evaluating Ideas: An Introduction to Critical Reading.” This chapter provides students with the instructions and models they will need in order to engage with the selections in this book. To do this, it walks students through a range of methods they can adopt to participate in a meaningful dialogue with each selection, focusing on prereading, annotating, questioning, reviewing, discussing, and forming one’s own ideas. To illustrate these steps, a portion of Machiavelli’s “The Qualities of the Prince” is annotated to help students follow the key ideas of the piece and to model for students a critical reading process that they can adapt to other essays in the book. I encourage students to mark what they think are the most interesting and important ideas in an essay and highlight or underline all sentences that they might want to quote in an essay of their own. Ultimately, this active, questioning approach to texts and ideas is key to critical reading, and to effective writing as well.

“Writing about Ideas: An Introduction to Rhetoric.” In the eleventh edition, this chapter includes even more scaffolded coverage of rhetorical analysis and composition, with an emphasis on developing thesis statements, using rhetorical methods of development, and thinking critically to construct a strong argument. Many new examples based on selections in the eleventh edition help students find fruitful approaches to the material. This chapter explains and then models various stages in the writing process, from the opening paragraph to a full student essay, by showing students how to annotate a text using critical reading strategies and then use those annotations to respond to the ideas presented in the selection. To do this, “Writing about Ideas” draws on the annotations of the Machiavelli selection illustrated in “Evaluating Ideas: An Introduction to Critical Reading.” A sample student essay on Machiavelli, using the techniques taught in the context of reading and writing, gives students a model for moving from a critical response to a selection to writing their own material. In addition, this section helps students understand how they can apply some of the basic rhetorical principles discussed throughout the book.

SELECTION HEADNOTES.

Each selection is preceded by a helpful headnote that provides background on the author’s life, work, and historical context, as well as on the primary ideas explored and rhetorical techniques employed in the reading. The rhetorical techniques of the author are described in some detail, showing students how great writers construct their arguments as well as emphasizing the kinds of

techniques that students themselves can use. The discussion of the author’s rhetoric uses the same language as the rhetorical skills introduced in “Writing about Ideas,” so that students can refer to that chapter for further guidance on analyzing these devices and using them to specific effects.

PREREADING QUESTIONS.

In response to research that shows that students retain information better when they read with a question in mind, prereading questions precede every selection. The content of the selections is challenging, and these prereading questions can help students in first-year writing courses find ways into the reading in order to understand the author’s meaning and engage with their arguments. These brief questions are designed to help students focus on central issues during their initial reading of each selection.

First confirm the title and the central idea, read the article with the central question, and try to find the answer from the article. therefore more deeply understand the author's thoughts.

EXTENSIVE APPARATUS.

At the end of each selection is a group of discussion questions designed for use inside or outside the classroom. “Questions for Critical Reading” focus on key issues and ideas and can be used to stimulate discussion and critical thinking. “Suggestions for Critical Writing” help students practice some of the rhetorical strategies employed by the author of a given selection. These suggestions ask for different kinds of writing, including personal responses as well as essays that involve research, helping students to dig into a selection as well as consider its implications and effects today. “Connections” questions push students further,

Critical writing is through thinking and criticizing the rhetoric, content and thoughts in the author's articles, expressing personal thoughts, reflecting on what they have learned, and considering how their thoughts are deepened changed according to reading and writing.

inviting them to consider thinkers in the context of each other's work. This promotes critical reading by requiring students to connect particular passages in a selection with a selection by another writer, either in the same part of the book or in another part. It also prepares students to challenge the writers they read by suggesting other arguments and ways of thinking that might help them consider each thinker's ideas. The variety of connections is intriguing — Lao-tzu with Machiavelli, Adam Smith with Thomas Jefferson, Sigmund Freud with Plato, Francis Bacon with Howard Gardner, Kwame Anthony Appiah with Michael Gazzaniga, Judith Butler with Simone de Beauvoir, Karen Horney with Carl Jung, Andrew Carnegie with Robin Wall Kimmerer, Hsün Tzu with Aristotle, and many more.

To help students understand the relevance of each idea to their world, I ask a number of questions at the beginning of each thematic section of the book, before the student reads any of the essays. This helps them consider their own thoughts about government, culture, wealth, education, ethics, gender, and science before they begin examining those ideas. Then, I provide a number of follow-up questions at the end of each section to help students reflect on what they have learned and consider how their ideas may have deepened or changed in response to the reading and writing they have done.

INSTRUCTOR'S RESOURCE MANUAL.

I have prepared an extensive manual, *Resources for Teaching A World of Ideas*, that contains further background on the

selections, examples from my own classroom responses to the selections, and more suggestions for classroom discussion and student writing assignments. Sentence outlines for the selections — which have been carefully prepared by myself, Michael Hennessy, Carol Verberg, Ellen Troutman, Ellen Darion, and Jon Marc Smith — can be downloaded from the Instructor Resources tab on the book’s catalog page at macmillanlearning.com and given to students. The idea for these sentence outlines came from the phrase outlines that Darwin created to precede each chapter of *On the Origin of Species*. These outlines may be used to discuss the more difficult selections and to provide additional guidance for students. At the end of the manual, brief bibliographies are provided for all forty-nine authors. These bibliographies may be photocopied or downloaded and distributed to students who wish to explore the primary selections in greater depth.

New in the Eleventh Edition

The eleventh edition offers a number of new features to help students engage and interact with the texts as they learn to analyze ideas and develop their own thoughts in writing.

NEW ESSENTIAL READINGS.

The selections in *A World of Ideas* explore key ideas that have defined the human experience and shaped civilization. Of the forty-nine selections, twenty-five are new to this edition, including works by Aristotle, Simone de Beauvoir, Rachel Carson, W. E. B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, Philippa Foot, Judith Lorber, Catherine MacKinnon, Maria Montessori, Mary Midgely, and Jose Ortega y Gasset, among others.

NEW CONTEMPORARY READINGS.

In today's world, it is more important than ever that students read and respond to our society's greatest minds. While this includes many historical thinkers, for this edition I have also included more contemporary voices, such as Barbara Ehrenreich, Francis Fukuyama, James Gleick, bell hooks, Molly Haskell, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Dambiso Moyo, Marilynne Robinson, and Cornel West, among others, all of whom are continuing to push how we think and write about the problems of our world. What is good government? How do we address inequality? How does gender relate to power? These are not questions of the past but rather urgent problems for the present, and reading both past and present thinkers on these issues will help prepare students for a

world where they too must consider their opinions on these questions.

REORGANIZED FOUNDATIONAL IDEAS.

The selections in the seven sections — Government, Culture, Wealth, Education, Ethics, Gender, and Science — cover considerable historical periods and attitudes toward their subjects. All seven sections contain ideas that affect every one of us in important ways.

- **Government:** The theme of government considers the origins and development of democracies and other forms of government, as well as how these institutions are changing today.
- **Culture:** The theme of culture considers how our society shapes and changes the assumptions, rules, and norms that affect us all, examining concepts from justice and violence to psychology and prejudice.
- **Wealth:** The theme of wealth centers on the history of economics and how people have interpreted the effects of money on society. In a society facing massive inequalities, it helps to understand how important thinkers reckon with the stress that great wealth has put upon democratic governments.
- **Education:** The theme of education considers what defines an education, both historically and today.
- **Ethics:** This theme considers how understandings of ethical principles affect government, cultural forces, economists, and scientific upheavals to avoid injustice and oppression.

- **Gender:** This theme focuses on the intersection between culture and biology as it traces various interpretations of the category of gender. It also explores the impact of gender norms, looking at issues of injustice, harassment, and gender identity, particularly in our world today.
- **Science:** The final theme focuses more on the scientific way of thinking than on specific details. It charts how Plato’s and Bacon’s ways of thinking spurred the development of science, developing methodologies that Darwin and his successors used to reshape humanity’s concept of its own origins. Today, scientists continue to refine their methods and apply their questions to better understand the mysteries of the world around them, from the consequences of climate change to the concept of time.

It is important to see how these seven great themes intersect in everyone’s life. The “Considerations” and “Reflections” questions I have provided at the beginning and end of each of these sections are designed to provide a way of reflecting on the great ideas that are explored in detail, but they also are designed to help students understand how much they have learned from the ideas in each section.

SEPARATE — AND MORE — “CONNECTIONS” QUESTIONS.

Now a separate group of questions, these prompts ask students to analyze, synthesize, and also construct their own arguments about the relationships between different texts. They consider both writers addressing the same great idea and writers

addressing different ideas. There are now two to four “Connections” questions per selection, providing instructors more options to stimulate comparative critical thinking and writing.

MORE SUPPORT FOR ALL LEVELS OF STUDENT.

The instruction in [Chapters 1](#) and [2](#) has been expanded to provide more explanation for students about the reading and writing process. Based on instructor feedback, new examples, as well as more stepped-out and clearer instruction, provide support for students who might struggle with the reading and assignments.

Acknowledgments

Like its predecessors, the eleventh edition is indebted to a great many creative people at Bedford/St. Martin's, whose support is invaluable. Leasa Burton, Vice President of Editorial for the Humanities and John Sullivan, Senior Program Manager for Readers and Literature, have all offered support and guidance during the revision process. My editor for the eleventh edition, Evelyn Denham, has been a steady guiding hand, discussing material with me and helping me make wise choices. She has been an inspiration in dealing with sometimes intractable problems and has responded with encouragement and the kind of help only the very best editors can provide.

Assisting her were a number of hardworking individuals, including Cari Goldfine, who also assisted with the instructor's manual. Lidia MacDonald-Carr, content project manager, handled innumerable important details and made helpful suggestions. Daniel Nighting, copy editor, improved the prose and watched out for inconsistencies. Thanks also to several staff members and researchers: Mark Schaefer cleared text permissions, William Boardman found the cover artwork and designed the marvelous cover, and Richard Fox secured permission for all the images. I also want to thank the students — quite a few of them — who wrote me directly about their experiences reading the first ten editions. I have attended carefully to what they told me, and I am warmed by their high regard for the material in this book.

I am grateful to a number of people who made important suggestions for earlier editions, among them Shoshana Milgram Knapp of Virginia Polytechnic and State University and Michael Hennessy of Texas State University–San Marcos. I want to thank Michelle McSweeney for her work on the sentence outlines for the instructor’s manual, and I again thank Jon Marc Smith of Texas State University–San Marcos and Chiara Sulprizio of the Loyola Marymount University for assisting with the manuals for previous editions. I also remain grateful to Michael Bybee, formerly of St. John’s College in Santa Fe, for suggesting many fascinating pieces by non-Western thinkers, all of which he has taught to his own students. I also want to thank former Bedford/St. Martin’s colleagues, including Charles Christensen, former president, whose concern for the excellence of this book and whose close attention to detail were truly admirable. I continue to appreciate the advice of Joan E. Feinberg, former president of Macmillan Learning, and Denise Wydra, former president of Bedford/St. Martin’s, whose suggestions over the years were always timely and excellent. Karen Henry, former editorial director for English, and Steve Scipione, former senior executive editor, offered many useful ideas and suggestions as well, especially in the early stages of development, and kept their sharp eyes on the project throughout. In earlier editions, I also had help from Alicia Young, Diane Kraut, Maura Shea, Sarah Cornog, Rosemary Winfield, Michelle Clark, Professor Mary W. Cornog, Ellen Kuhl, Mark Reimold, Andrea Goldman, Beth Castrodale, Jonathan Burns, Mary Beth McNulty, Beth Chapman, Mika De Roo, and Greg Johnson. I feel I had a personal relationship with each of them.

Earlier editions named hundreds of users of this book who sent their comments and encouragement. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them again. In addition, the following professors were generous with criticism, praise, and detailed recommendations for the eleventh edition: Brian R. Adler, Pasadena City College; Alexander V. Bernal, San Antonio - College; Kenneth Robert Chacon, Fresno City College; Shayne D. Confer, Union College; Jeff Cryan, Flagler College; Jeffrey R. Diller, Jr., Santa Ana College; David Elias, Eastern Kentucky University; Michael Hill, Henry Ford Community College; Colin S. Innes, University of California, Riverside; Jessica Jost-Costanzo, Mount Aloysius College; Kylie Kaiser, Nashville State Community College; Janet Mitchell Lambert, Cerritos College; Anthony Lioi, The Juilliard School; Heather Lusty, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Phillip Mahaffey, Treasure Valley Community College; Betsy McCormick, Mount San Antonio College; Craig A. Meyer, Texas A&M University–Kingsville; Richard Myers, Mt. San Antonio Community College; Kristen Nielsen, Wentworth Institute of - Technology; John O’Hara, University of North Carolina–Wilmington; Moremi Ogbara, Pasadena City College; Michael Podolny, Onondaga Community College; Cassandra Hernandez Rios, Golden West College; Susan Sainato, Kent State University; Matt Sautman, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville; Kendall Smith, Moreno Valley College; Marjory Thrash, Pearl River - Community College; Gregory J. Underwood, Pearl River Community College; and Justin Williamson, Pearl River Community College.

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Instructor Resources

You have a lot to do in your course. We want to make it easy for you to find the support you need — and to get it quickly.

The ***Instructor's Manual for A World of Ideas, Eleventh Edition*** is available as a PDF that can be downloaded from [macmillanlearning.com](https://www.macmillanlearning.com). In addition to chapter overviews and teaching tips, the instructor's manual includes sample syllabi, sentence outlines for the readings, and classroom activities.

To the Student

When the first edition of *A World of Ideas* was published, the notion that students in first-year composition courses should be able to read and write about challenging works by great thinkers was a radical one. In fact, no other composition reader at the time included selections from such important thinkers as Martha Nussbaum, Aristotle, Adam Smith, Andrew Carnegie, Karl Marx, Plato, Charles Darwin, Michio Kaku, or Mary Wollstonecraft. I had expected a moderate response from a small number of people. Instead, teachers and students alike sent me a swarm of mail commending the book for the challenge it provided and the insights they gained.

One of the first letters I received was from a young woman who had read the book after she graduated from college. She said she had heard of the thinkers included in *A World of Ideas* but in her college career had never read any of their works. Reading them now, she said, was long overdue. Another student wrote me an elaborate letter in which he demonstrated that every one of the selections in the book had been used as the basis of a *Star Trek* episode. He sagely connected every selection to a specific episode and convinced me that whoever was writing *Star Trek* had read some of the world's most important thinkers. Other students have written to tell me that they found themselves using the material in this book in other courses, such as psychology, philosophy, literature, and history, among others. In many cases, these students were the only ones among their peers who had read the key authors in their discipline.

Sometimes, you will have to read the selections in *A World of Ideas* more than once. Works by influential thinkers, such as Judith Butler, Adam Smith, Sigmund Freud, Francis Bacon, Dambisa Moyo, and Howard Gardner, can be very challenging. But do not let the challenge discourage you. In “Evaluating Ideas: An Introduction to Critical Reading,” I suggest methods for annotating and questioning texts that are designed to help you keep track of what you read and master the material. In addition, each selection is accompanied by a headnote on the author’s life and work, comments about the primary ideas presented in the selection, and a host of questions to help you overcome minor difficulties in understanding the author’s meaning. Some students have written to tell me that their first reading of the book was intimidating, but most of them have written later to tell me how they eventually overcame their initial fear that the selections would be too difficult for them. Ultimately, this material was important enough to merit their absolute attention.

The purpose of *A World of Ideas* is to help you learn to write better by giving you something really significant to think and write about. The selections not only are avenues into some of the most serious thought on their subjects but also are stimulating enough to sustain close analysis and produce many good ideas for writing. For example, when you think about democracy, it helps to know what Lao-Tzu said about government in ancient China, just as it is important to understand the ideals Thomas Jefferson was championing when he penned the Declaration of Independence. Mary Wollstonecraft was also a radical political thinker of her time, advocating for greater respect and better opportunities for women

in a society that did not value their gifts and talents. Indeed, social justice is integral to thinking about culture; Hsun Tzu takes the view that our basic nature is evil and that we need to learn to be good. Frederick Douglass speaks from the perspective of a former slave when he cries out against the injustice of an institution that existed in the Americas for hundreds of years. And a hundred years after Douglass, the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., sent his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” still demanding justice for African Americans and freedom seekers everywhere. The questions of ethics that still haunt us are treated by Michael Gazzaniga in relation to brain physiology, and by Kwame Anthony Appiah in relation to situational and virtue ethics, each of which concentrates on the relation of ones’ character to one’s ethical behavior. All these writers place their views in the larger context of a universal dialogue on the subject of justice. When you write, you add your own voice to the conversation. By commenting on the selections, expressing and arguing a position, and pointing out contradictions or contrasts among texts, you are participating in the world of ideas.

Keep in mind that I prepared *A World of Ideas* for my own students, most of whom work their way through college and do not take the idea of earning an education lightly. For that reason, I felt I owed them the opportunity to encounter the very best minds I could put them in touch with. Anything less seemed to me a missed opportunity. I hope you, like so many other writing students, find this book both educational and inspiring.

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One of the most eloquent orators of the nineteenth century, Frederick Douglass reveals how an indomitable spirit reacted to a system of law that sanctioned slavery, treated people as chattel, and denied justice for them and their offspring in perpetuity.

SIGMUND FREUD *The Oedipus Complex*

After Freud posited the existence and functioning of the unconscious mind, one of his most important — and controversial — theories was the assertion that infants went through a stage in which they unconsciously wished to possess their opposite-sex parent all for themselves.

CARL JUNG *The Personal and the Collective Unconscious*

Jung proposes that as a cultural group we have a collective unconscious — unconscious awareness and wishes that transcend the individual and represent the needs of the group to which we belong.

VIRGINIA WOOLF *Shakespeare's Sister*

In this excerpt from *A Room of One's Own*, her book-length essay on the role of women in history and society, Woolf imaginatively reconstructs the environment of Shakespeare's hypothetical sister and demonstrates how little opportunity she would have had in the sixteenth century.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. *Letter from Birmingham Jail*

King, a minister and civil rights leader, advocates nonviolent action as a means of changing the unconscionable practices of racial segregation and achieving justice for all.

FRANTZ FANON *On Violence*

In this excerpt from *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), the psychiatrist and revolutionary philosopher Frantz Fanon argues for the necessity of violence in the overthrow of colonial regimes by exposing the psychological trauma inflicted by colonial oppression.

BARBARA EHRENREICH *Is The Middle Class Doomed?*

An award winning investigative journalist and writer, Ehrenreich draws on both government data and expert testimony to make the case that the middle class is necessary for the health of democracy, and that the middle class today is in great danger due to rising inequality.

Reflections on the Nature of Culture

PART THREE WEALTH

Some Considerations about the Nature of Wealth

ADAM SMITH *The Value of Labor*

This excerpt from the classic work on modern capitalism, *The Wealth of Nations*, explores the economic relationship between rural areas and cities in an attempt to understand the “natural” steps to wealth.

KARL MARX *The Communist Manifesto*

Marx, the most thorough critic of laissez-faire capitalism, traces the dehumanizing progress of the nineteenth-century bourgeois economic structure and heralds its downfall at the hands of a united international proletariat.

ANDREW CARNEGIE *The Gospel of Wealth*

The great American industrialist and steel magnate argues that it is not only desirable but natural that some people in a free society should be enormously wealthy and that most should not. He also insists that great personal wealth is held in trust for the public and must be given away during one's own lifetime to support worthy causes.

F. A. HAYEK *Economic Control and Totalitarianism*

A major twentieth-century conservative economist, Hayek praised laissez-faire business practices and warned against the forces of socialism in modern capitalist nations. He saw socialism as the first stage in government's asserting total power over the individual.

ROBERT B. REICH *Why the Rich Are Getting Richer and the Poor, Poorer*

The former secretary of labor talks about the different categories of workers in the United States and the inevitable changes occurring as the U.S. economy is altered by economic inequality at home and globalization abroad.

ROBIN WALL KIMMERER *The Gift of Strawberries*

A scholar, writer, and botanist, in this essay Kimmerer acknowledges the power of the market economy, while drawing on the culture of her Potawatomi heritage to demonstrate the value of a gift economy in which people share and do their best to nurture the environment and avoid its exploitation.

[DAMBISA MOYO *Economic Growth Matters to Ordinary People*](#)

Economist Dambisa Moyo focuses on the ways in which a growth economy affects the individual as well as the community, showing both how the effects of contracting economies can cause rises in populism and instability, as well as how individuals can react to these trends in their own communities.

[Reflections on the Nature of Wealth](#)

PART FOUR EDUCATION

[Some Considerations about the Nature of Education](#)

[MICHEL EYQUEM DE MONTAIGNE *Of the Education of Children*](#)

A Renaissance essayist, Montaigne's *Of The Education of Children* urges children to question the world around them and argues that it is more important for people to be virtuous and well-rounded rather than merely bookish.

[MARIA MONTESSORI *The Montessori Method*](#)

A ground-breaking educator, this essay on the Montessori method offers an innovative way of educating young children that allows for exploration

and play, based on research developed in low income Italy in the early twentieth century.

[DIANE RAVITCH *The Essentials of a Good Education*](#)

Education historian and former Assistant Secretary for Education Diane Ravitch explores the ramifications of charter schools, privatization, and increased testing for education in the United States.

[MARILYNNE ROBINSON *What Are We Doing Here?*](#)

The celebrated novelist and essay writer Marilynne Robinson, in a talk given to English teachers in Great Britain, defends the humanities and a liberal arts education.

[HOWARD GARDNER *A Rounded Version: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*](#)

Gardner, a contemporary psychologist, has a novel view of the mind that proposes seven distinct forms of human intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal.

[MARTHA NUSSBAUM *Education for Democracy*](#)

Classicist and philosopher Martha Nussbaum examines current approaches taken in the US to prepare students for life after graduation and considers the consequences of a system that emphasizes job preparation rather than educating contributing citizens.

[BELL HOOKS *Educating Women: A Feminist Agenda*](#)

In this essay, the scholar and activist bell hooks argues for better communication and educational techniques that reach all women rather than just an educated elite.

Reflections on the Nature of Education

PART FIVE ETHICS

Some Considerations about the Nature of Ethics

ARISTOTLE *The Aim of Man*

Aristotle describes the search for the highest good, which he defines as happiness. In the process of defining the good, he relates it to the idea of virtuous behavior, living an ethical and moral life. For him, the concept of morality is communal, not just individual.

HSÜN TZU *Man's Nature Is Evil*

One of the revered ancient Chinese philosophers, Hsün Tzu believed that humans were naturally evil and needed to be taught to be good. He insists that people defer to the wisdom of the ancients and learn to overcome their natural instincts in order to behave ethically.

W. E. B. DU BOIS *The Souls of White Folk*

In this essay, sociologist and essayist W.E.B. Du Bois analyzes the role that racism played in the causes of World War I and explores the ethical implications of colonialism.

MARY MIDGELY *Trying Out One's Sword*

Moral philosopher Mary Midgely proposed an interesting ethical problem — whether it is possible to

judge the practices of other cultures if we are not part of those cultures ourselves — and explores the implications of various answers to this question.

PHILIPPA FOOT *Virtues and Vices*

Ethicist Philippa Foot considers the benefits and consequences of cardinal virtues and vices as they relate to both individual happiness and community success.

MICHAEL GAZZANIGA *Toward a Universal Ethics*

Gazzaniga, a famous neuroscientist who has examined brain physiology and the genetics of brain development, considers the possibility that some people are genetically disposed toward unethical behavior.

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH *If You're Happy and You Know It*

An ethicist and public intellectual, Appiah thinks carefully about the meaning of the word *happiness* itself in order to establish that happiness is both a social experience and a virtue.

Reflections on the Nature of Ethics

PART SIX GENDER

Some Considerations about the Nature of Gender

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT *Of the Pernicious Effects Which Arise from the Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society*

In this excerpt from one of the first great works of feminism, Wollstonecraft argues that the laws,

property rights, and class distinctions of her day are mechanisms of control that deny women their liberty and demean their lives.

[KAREN HORNEY *The Distrust between the Sexes*](#)

Horney, the first major female psychoanalyst, looks at Freud's theories and other cultures to establish her own theory of development that accounts for the tangled relations between the sexes.

[SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR *If Man and Woman Were Equal*](#)

In this groundbreaking essay, de Beauvoir makes an argument for the need for equality between men and women and considers what would need to change in society to make the aspiration of equality possible.

[JUDITH LORBER *Paradoxes of Gender*](#)

In *Paradoxes of Gender*, sociologist Judith Lorber puts together a catalogue of gender descriptions and accommodation in order to better understand social construction, and possible deconstruction, of gender categories.

[MOLLY HASKELL *Who Has It Better, Men or Women?*](#)

Feminist film critic Molly Haskell examines her relationship with her sibling Chevey, recounting Chevey's experiences before and after her gender transition.

[CATHARINE A. MACKINNON *Sexual Harassment: Its First Decade in Court \(Chapter 9 from *Feminism Unmodified*\)*](#)

Legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon explores the underlying effect of the law on individuals in society as she traces developments in legal precedent concerning sexual harassment in the workplace.

JUDITH BUTLER *From Undoing Gender*

Judith Butler calls the entire question of gender identification and gender essentialism into question, relating the story of a young boy's mutilation in infancy that resulted in his being raised as a girl.

Reflections on the Nature of Gender

PART SEVEN SCIENCE

Some Considerations about the Nature of Science

PLATO *The Allegory of the Cave*

Plato, the founder of Western philosophy, talks about the nature of perception and the limits of the human mind, emphasizing the difficulties everyone encounters in discovering the truth about appearances.

FRANCIS BACON *The Four Idols*

A prominent figure in philosophy and politics during the reign of England's Elizabeth I, Bacon describes the obstacles that hinder human beings' efforts to understand the world around them and the mysteries of nature.

CHARLES DARWIN *Natural Selection*

The scrupulous habits of observation that culminated in the landmark theory of evolution are everywhere

evident in Darwin's analysis of the ways species adapt to their natural environments.

RACHEL CARSON *The Obligation to Endure*

In this chapter from *Silent Spring* (1962), environmental activist Rachel Carson describes the shocking long-term effects of using pesticides in our environment, sounding an alarm that sparked an environmental movement.

MICHIO KAKU *The Theory of the Universe?*

Kaku, a physicist concerned with the forces evident in the universe, discusses the superstring theory of particle physics as well as the complexities of ten-dimensional hyperspace. He discusses quantum theory as well as Einstein's special theory of relativity.

RUTH MOORE *Evolution Revised: A New Time and a New Way*

Science writer Ruth Moore explains for a popular audience the evolutionary changes that caused humans to evolve from apes, identifying the change in pelvis shape that allowed them to walk upright, rather than brain growth, as the key development in the process.

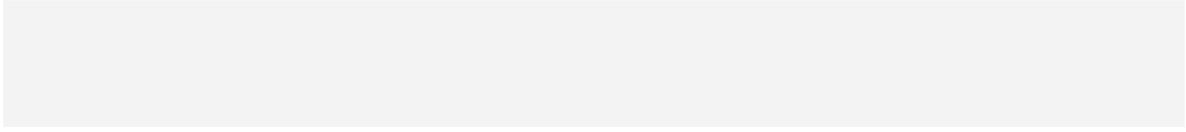
JAMES GLEICK *What Is Time?*

Physicist James Gleick sets out to define "time," only to discover no definition that is not circular or incomplete. In the process, he dwells on how insufficient our concept of time is for the practice of modern science.

Reflections on the Nature of Science

Acknowledgments

Index of Authors, Titles, and Terms



Evaluating Ideas

AN INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL READING

THE SELECTIONS IN THIS BOOK demand a careful and attentive reading. The authors, whose works have changed the way we view our world, our institutions, and ourselves, communicate their views with clarity and style. But their views are complex and subtle, and we must train ourselves to read them sensitively, responsively, and critically. Critical reading is essential for approaching the essays in this book. Indeed, it is fundamental for approaching any reading material that deserves serious attention.

Because of the significance of the material in this book, and because some of the classical authors wrote in styles unlike those used today, it is essential to develop certain reading skills to successfully engage with the selections in this book. Some of these readings are quite challenging. You may find some of the sentences complex and some of the paragraphs long and difficult. For example, the famous politician and strategist Niccolò Machiavelli wrote during the sixteenth century, when writing commonly included far more words in a sentence than today. Additionally, some words that were common for classical writers have fallen out of use over time and may be unfamiliar to you, while some contemporary writers use theoretical or discipline-specific terms that are also unfamiliar. As a result, some of these essays may cause you to stop and think. But that really is the

point of this book. We all need to stop and think about the great ideas presented here.

In order to help you get the most out of this book, this chapter introduces you to techniques for critical reading. As the term implies, **critical reading** involves taking a position on the material you read. In other words, be an **active reader**. Do not let the words slip by without accepting the challenge implied in the writer's argument. Indeed, you should begin by assuming that all the writers in this book are presenting you with arguments. They are trying to convince you and perhaps change your mind about their subject matter. That means you have to decide whether to accept the premises — or assumptions — of the writer's argument or to reject them. And that means you need to understand the argument to begin with.

Reading critically means that you need to be on your toes when you read. You should challenge the writer and think about how you might construct an argument of your own that would support a different position. You need not always contradict a writer when you challenge their position; instead, you may want to clarify an important point or develop further an aspect of the argument that you feel is not fully formed or explored.

Critical reading involves most of the following processes:

- **Prereading.** Developing a sense of what the piece is about and what its general purposes are.

- **Annotating.** Using a pencil or a pen to mark those passages that seem important enough to return to later. Annotations establish a dialogue between you and the author.
- **Questioning.** Raising issues that you feel need to be taken into consideration. These may be issues that you believe the author has treated either well or badly and that you feel are important. Questioning can be part of the annotation process.
- **Reviewing.** Rereading your annotations in order to grasp the entire picture of what you've just read. Sometimes writing a summary of the piece as you review makes the meaning even clearer.
- **Discussing.** Discussion is a crucial aspect of critical reading. The classroom offers many opportunities to try out your ideas in relation to your readings and the thoughts of your peers.
- **Forming your own ideas.** Reviewing what you have read, evaluating the way that the writer presents the issues, and developing your own views on the issues. This is the final step.

The Process of Critical Reading

PREREADING

Context

Before you read a particular selection in this book, turn to the beginning of the part in which it appears for an introduction discussing the broader issues and questions central to all the selections in the part. This may help you focus your thoughts and formulate your opinions as you read the essays themselves.

Begin any selection in this book by reading its headnote to get a sense of its context. Each headnote supplies historical background on the writer, sets the intellectual stage for the ideas discussed in the essay, and comments on the writer's main points. The second part of each headnote introduces the main rhetorical or stylistic methods that the writer uses to communicate his or her thoughts. By reading the headnote, you will develop an overview that helps prepare you for reading the essay.

This kind of preparation is typical of critical reading. It makes the task of reading more delightful, more useful, and much easier. A review of the headnote to Machiavelli and part of his essay "[The Qualities of the Prince](#)" will illustrate the usefulness of such preparation. This essay appears in Part One, "Government," so you can already expect the content to be concerned with styles of

government. The introduction to Machiavelli provides the following points, each followed by the number of the paragraph in which it appears:

Machiavelli was an Italian aristocrat in Renaissance Italy. ([para. 1](#))

Machiavelli describes the qualities necessary for a prince — that is, any ruler — to maintain power. ([para. 2](#))

A weak Italy was prey to the much stronger France and Spain at this time. ([para. 2](#))

Machiavelli recommends securing and maintaining power by whatever means necessary. ([para. 3](#))

His concern for moralizing or acting out of high moral principle is not great. ([para. 3](#))

He supports questionable means of becoming and remaining prince. ([para. 3](#))

Machiavelli does not fret over the means used to achieve his ends and sometimes advocates repression, imprisonment, and torture. ([para. 3](#))

Machiavelli has been said to have a cynical view of human nature. ([para. 4](#))

His rhetorical method is to discuss both sides of an issue: cruelty and mercy, liberality and stinginess. ([para. 8](#))

He uses aphorisms to persuade the reader that he is saying something wise and true. ([para. 9](#))

With these observations in mind, the reader knows that the selection that follows will be concerned with governance in Renaissance Italy. The question of ends versus means is central to Machiavelli's discussion, and he does not idealize people and their general goodness. Yet because of Machiavelli's rhetorical methods, particularly his use of aphorisms,¹ the reader can expect that Machiavelli's argument will be exceptionally persuasive.

Thus, as a critical reader, you should keep track of these basic statements from the headnote. You need not accept all of them,

but you should certainly be alert to the issues that will probably be central to your experience of the essay. Remember: it is just as reasonable to question the headnote as it is to question the essay itself.

Scanning

Before reading the essay in detail, you might develop an overview of its meaning by scanning it quickly. In the case of “The Qualities of the Prince,” note the subheadings, such as “On Those Things for Which Men, and Particularly Princes, Are Praised or Blamed.” Checking each of the subheadings before you read the entire piece provides you with a “map” or guide to the essay.

For shorter essays and those with no subheadings — which include most selections in this book — another prereading strategy that can help you create a map of a writer’s argument is to search for clues in the opening sentence of every paragraph. Such sentences will not always reveal the major content or even the main idea, but they will give you a feel for the passage and a sense of what concerns the writer. If you make a list of all the opening sentences of the paragraphs of the whole selection, it will often approximate the outline of the passage. (Even if you don’t have time to make a list, underlining the opening sentences and reviewing them will accomplish the same objective.)

The Question or Assignment

Each passage is preceded by two or three prereading questions. These are designed to help you keep key points in mind as you

read. Each of these questions focuses your attention on an important idea or interpretation in the passage. For your reading of Machiavelli, the questions are as follows:

1. Why does Machiavelli praise skill in warfare in his opening pages? How does that skill aid a prince?
2. Is it better for a prince to be loved or to be feared?

A key element in Machiavelli's argument is the center of each question. By watching for the answer to these questions, you will find yourself focusing on some of the most important aspects of the passage. As with the prereading questions, you may be reading a selection with an assignment from your instructor or a research question in mind. Keeping this in mind can help you prepare for class discussion, answer your instructor's assignment, or find evidence to support your research question.

ANNOTATING AND QUESTIONING

Critical reading begins with prereading, which involves surveying the material at hand. You reflect on the selection's title and subtitle, then review the entire piece to see what its subheadings reveal as a guide to understanding the various ideas it contains. Next, you find the first sentences in the main paragraphs to see where the essay is headed. Annotating — taking notes — is the next step.

Annotating

As you read a text, your annotations establish a dialogue between you and the author that will be most visible in the margins of the essay. Take issue with key points or note your agreement — the more you annotate, the more you free your imagination to develop your own ideas. My own methods involve noting both agreement and disagreement. I annotate thoroughly, so that after a quick second glance I know what the author is saying as well as what I thought of the essay when I read it closely. My annotations help me keep the major points fresh in my mind.

Annotation has two forms. First, you will need to underline or circle the statements in the selection that seem most important to you, such as those that summarize the main ideas or the supporting ideas. (If you do not wish to underline the statements, then highlight, place check marks in the margin, or jot down key words or phrases in a physical or digital notebook.) Try to find the passages in which the author establishes an argument designed to convince you of a given position. Those passages should be marked because they provide you with the best opportunity to respond critically. The point is to keep track of what you think is important enough to refer back to for use in your own writing.

The second form of annotation involves keeping track of your ideas and responses as you read. Find the most interesting ideas the author presents and comment on them in the margin. Or, if you wish to be more extensive, write your response in a notebook, keeping in mind that you may refer back to these comments when you write a formal essay later. As you read carefully and critically, you will generate ideas of your own, and the reality is that there is

no better time than when you are reading a selection to keep track of what you think is important in it.

Annotation keeps track of both what the author says and what our responses are. No one can reduce annotation to a formula — we all do it differently — but it is not a passive act. Annotation is a form of note-taking that most critical readers and writers use as a matter of habit. It is good to develop this habit as early as possible.

When you annotate,

- Read with a pen or a pencil.
- Underline key sentences — for example, definitions and statements of purpose.
- Underline key words that appear often.
- Note the topic of paragraphs in the margins.
- Ask questions in the margins.
- Make notes in the margins to remind yourself to develop ideas later.
- Mark passages you might want to quote later.
- Keep track of the author's positions with which you disagree.

Questioning

The key to critical reading throughout the process of annotating and note-taking is to generate as many questions as possible. The passive reader simply absorbs some of the ideas the author presents, but the critical reader becomes part of a dialogue with the author. That sometimes involves evaluating and challenging

an author's ideas. For example, a critical reader may want to take issue with Andrew Carnegie's apparent view that the Sioux were uniformly poor because they were "primitive." Indeed, a critical reader may take issue with the idea that the Sioux were primitive in any sense. Likewise, a critical reader may ask why Carnegie disapproves of a people who all live at more or less the same economic level as their chief. All of these thoughts lead to a main question: Why does Carnegie think a society with rich and poor is better than a society without those distinctions? Clearly, this question is still relevant to us today, because we live with the consequences of the answer.

As you read through Carnegie's essay, you will find that he has many ideas that have remained influential. For example, he highly recommends the value of education and suggests that it is desirable to make as much money as possible in the middle years of one's life. Then, he recommends, rich people must give that money away in their later years. This kind of advice may meet with your approval. If so, as you read, your marginal comments and your notes will reveal that you would argue in favor of Carnegie's views. In fact, many people approve of Carnegie's opinions after thinking carefully about the problems that arise from some of his less attractive ideas. The point is that Carnegie's views are profoundly complex when you look at them closely. The critical reader will discover those complexities and be stimulated to respond to them.

REVIEWING AND DISCUSSING

Reviewing

Once you have annotated the text and feel that you have a good grasp of the general ideas being discussed, a careful review of your notes, underlines, and questions will help make everything clear to you. You will get a sense of the author's general argument by looking back on what you noted as you read, the ideas you took issue with, and the ideas you felt needed to be reexamined later. This review will also prepare you to discuss the text — either in an essay, with your instructor, or in class.

The practice of reviewing is valuable for increasing comprehension, especially of selections that make intense demands on the reader, such as Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Whereas some essays may not demand quite as much annotation and note-taking, longer or more complex essays will need more annotation and more careful analysis of the text as well as more time to reflect upon their meaning. Reviewing the author's work and then gathering your annotations, questions, and marginal responses provides you with material that helps you keep the essay clear in your mind and, at the same time, provides you with material for discussion and for developing your own ideas.

Discussing

Although it may seem unrelated, discussion is a crucial aspect of critical reading. The classroom offers many opportunities to try out your ideas in relation to the authors in this book. Talking about these works in a setting that not only encourages but also welcomes contradiction from and analysis with your peers is a gift.

Everyone benefits from testing ideas in a forum of people who have read the same material. Your ideas will not seem completely realized to you until you listen to how others have apprehended the same work. One of the most important principles of education is learning enough information to facilitate changing one's mind. If you do not open yourself to the possibility of changing your mind about an idea, you risk not growing into a full understanding of it.

Some suggestions (under the heading "Understanding Ideas") follow the selections to get the discussion under way, but you will probably want to begin any discussion by trying to establish what you think the main ideas are. In the best case, you may suggest your own views and find that they are developed by your peers. At the same time, it is beneficial to listen to opposing or different views on what the author is saying and how important or unimportant it may be. Hearing others raise concerns you did not notice is also a gift because it expands your understanding.

Learning how others arrive at their understanding of ideas helps you find your own way to the discoveries you make. Responding to views opposed to or different from our own is important. The process of testing your own ideas is central to your education. One of the best experiences you can have in a classroom is defending a position that others disagree with. Whether you end up changing your mind or not, the exercise will reveal the limits or the range of your understanding, and that will make a great difference when you write about your views. When discussing your ideas, you can test various approaches, learn from your missteps, respond to the criticism of others, and reshape your

understanding. When writing, however, you commit yourself to a point of view and a position that, because of discussion and the resulting analysis, you will want to feel is reasonable, sure-footed, and your own.

MODEL CRITICAL READING OF MACHIAVELLI'S *THE PRINCE*

Some sample annotations follow, again from Machiavelli's "The Qualities of the Prince." A sixteenth-century text in translation, *The Prince* is challenging to work with. My annotations appear in the form of underlines and marginal comments and questions. Only the first few paragraphs appear here, but the entire essay is annotated in my copy of the book.

A Prince's Duty Concerning Military Matters

The prince's profession should be war.

A prince, therefore, must not have any other object nor any other thought, nor must he take anything as his profession but war, its institutions, and its discipline; because that is the only profession which befits one who commands; and it is of such importance that not only does it maintain those who were born princes, but many times it enables men of private station to rise to that position; and, on the other hand, it is evident that when princes have given more thought to personal luxuries than to arms, they have lost their state. And the first way to lose it is to neglect this art; and the way to acquire it is to be well versed in this art.

Examples

Being disarmed makes you despised. Is this true?

Francesco Sforza became Duke of Milan from being a private citizen because he was armed; his sons, since they avoided the inconveniences of arms, became private citizens after having been dukes. For, among the other bad effects it causes, being disarmed makes you despised; this is one of those infamies a prince should guard himself against, as will be treated below: for between an armed and an unarmed man there is no comparison whatsoever, and it is not reasonable for an armed man to obey an unarmed man willingly, nor that an unarmed man should be safe among armed servants; since, when the former is suspicious and the latter are contemptuous, it is impossible for them to work well together. And therefore, a prince who does not understand military matters, besides the other misfortunes already noted, cannot be esteemed by his own soldiers, nor can he trust them.

Training: action/ mind

He must, therefore, never raise his thought from this exercise of war, and in peacetime he must train himself more than in time of war; this can be done in two ways: one by action, the other by the mind. And as far as actions are concerned, besides keeping his soldiers well disciplined and trained, he must always be out hunting, and must accustom

Description

The title of the text reads, A Prince's Duty Concerning Military Matters.

New paragraph. A prince, therefore, must not have any other object nor any other thought, nor must he take anything as his profession but war (The phrase profession but war is underlined, and a margin note

reads, The prince's profession should be war), its institutions, and its discipline; because that is the only profession which befits one who commands; and it is of such importance that not only does it maintain those who were born princes, but many times it enables men of private station to rise to that position; and, on the other hand, it is evident that when princes have given more thought to personal luxuries than to arms, they have lost their state. (The text, when princes have given more thought to personal luxuries than to arms, they have lost their state, is underlined.) And the first way to lose it is to neglect this art; and the way to acquire it is to be well versed in this art.

New paragraph. Francesco Sforza became Duke of Milan from being a private citizen because he was armed; his sons, since they avoided the inconveniences of arms, became private citizens after having been dukes. (A margin note reads, Examples) For, among the other bad effects it causes, being disarmed makes you despised; (A margin note reads, Being disarmed makes you despised. Is this true?) this is one of those infamies a prince should guard himself against, as will be treated below: for between an armed and an unarmed man there is no comparison whatsoever, and it is not reasonable for an armed man to obey an unarmed man willingly, nor that an unarmed man should be safe among armed servants; since, when the former is suspicious and the latter are contemptuous, it is impossible for them to work well together. And therefore, a prince who does not understand military matters, besides the other misfortunes already noted, cannot be esteemed by his own soldiers, nor can he trust them.

New paragraph. He must, therefore, never raise his thought from this exercise of war, and in peacetime he must train himself more than in time of war; this can be done in two ways: one by action, the other by the mind (The phrase by action, the other by the mind is underlined). And as far as actions are concerned, besides keeping his soldiers well disciplined and trained (The phrase besides keeping his soldiers well disciplined and trained is underlined, and a margin note reads,

training: action/mind], he must always be out hunting, and must
accustom

Knowledge of
terrain

Two benefits

his body to hardships in this manner; and he must also learn the nature of the terrain, and know how mountains slope, how valleys open, how plains lie, and understand the nature of rivers and swamps; and he should devote much attention to such activities. Such knowledge is useful in two ways: first, one learns to know one's own country and can better understand how to defend it; second, with the knowledge and experience of the terrain, one can easily comprehend the characteristics of any other terrain that it is necessary to explore for the first time; for the hills, valleys, plains, rivers, and swamps of Tuscany, for instance, have certain similarities to those of other provinces; so that by knowing the lay of the land in one province one can easily understand it in others. And a prince who lacks this ability lacks the most important quality in a leader; because this skill teaches you to find the enemy, choose a campsite, lead troops, organize them for battle, and besiege towns to your own advantage.

[There follow the examples of Philopoemon, who was always observing terrain for its military usefulness, and a recommendation that princes read histories and learn from them. Three paragraphs are omitted.]

On Those Things for Which Men, and Particularly Princes, Are Praised or Blamed

Now there remains to be examined what should be the methods and procedures of a prince in dealing with his subjects and friends. And because I know that many have written about this, I am afraid that by writing about it again I shall be thought of as presumptuous, since in discussing this material I depart radically from the procedures of others. But since my intention is to write something useful for anyone who understands it, it seemed more suitable to me to search after the effectual truth of the matter rather than its imagined one. And many writers have imagined for themselves republics and principalities that have never been seen nor known to exist in reality; for there is such a gap between how one lives and how one ought to live that anyone who abandons what is done for what ought to be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation: for a man who wishes to make a vocation of being good at all times will come to ruin among so many who are not good. Hence it is necessary for

*Those who are good
at all times come to
ruin among those
who are not good.*

Description

The text reads, his body to hardships in this manner; and he must also learn the nature of the terrain, and know how mountains slope, how valleys open, how plains lie (The text, also learn the nature of the terrain, and know how mountains slope, how valleys open, how plains lie, is underlined, and a margin note reads, Knowledge of terrain), and understand the nature of rivers and swamps; and he should devote much attention to such activities. Such knowledge is useful in two ways (The phrase Such knowledge is useful in two ways is underlined, and a margin note reads, Two benefits): first, one learns to know one's own country and can better understand how to defend it; second, with the knowledge and experience of the terrain, one can easily comprehend the characteristics of any other terrain that it is necessary to explore for the first time; for the hills, alleys, plains, rivers, and swamps of Tuscany, for instance, have certain similarities to those of other provinces; so that by knowing the lay of the land in one province one can easily understand it in others. And a prince who lacks this ability lacks the most important quality in a leader; because this skill teaches you to find the enemy, choose a campsite, lead troops, organize them for battle, and besiege towns to your own advantage.

New paragraph. [There follow the examples of Philopoemon, who was always observing terrain for its military usefulness, and a recommendation that princes read histories and learn from them. Three paragraphs are omitted.]

Sub heading. On Those Things for Which Men, and Particularly Princes, Are Praised or Blamed New paragraph. Now there remains to be examined what should be the methods and procedures of a prince (The text, the methods and procedures of a prince is underlined.) in dealing with his subjects and friends. And because I know that many have written about this, I am afraid that by writing about it again I shall be thought of as presumptuous, since in discussing this material I depart radically from the procedures of others. But since my intention

is to write something useful for anyone who understands it, it seemed more suitable to me to search after the effectual truth of the matter rather than its imagined one. And many writers have imagined for themselves republics and principalities that have never been seen nor known to exist in reality; for there is such a gap between how one lives and how one ought to live that anyone who abandons what is done for what ought to be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation: for a man who wishes to make a vocation of being good at all times will come to ruin among so many who are not good (The text, for a man who wishes to make a vocation of being good at all times will come to ruin among so many who are not good, is underlined, and a margin note reads, Those who are good at all times come to ruin among those who are not good.). Hence it is necessary for

Prince must learn how not to be good.

a prince who wishes to maintain his position to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge or not to use it according to necessity.

Note the prince's reputation.

Leaving aside, therefore, the imagined things concerning a prince, and taking into account those that are true, I say that all men, when they are spoken of, and particularly princes, since they are placed on a higher level, are judged by some of these qualities which bring them either blame or praise. And this is why one is considered generous, another miserly (to use a Tuscan word, since "avaricious" in our language is still used to mean one who wishes to acquire by means of theft; we call "miserly" one who excessively avoids using what he has); one is considered a giver, the other rapacious; one cruel, another merciful; one treacherous, another faithful; one effeminate and cowardly, another bold and courageous; one humane, another haughty; one lascivious, another chaste; one trustworthy, another cunning; one harsh, another lenient; one serious, another frivolous; one religious, another unbelieving; and the like. And I know that everyone will admit that it would be a very praiseworthy thing to find in a prince, of the qualities mentioned above, those that are held to be good, but since it is neither possible to have them nor to observe them all completely, because human nature does not permit it, a prince must be prudent enough to know how to escape the bad reputation of those vices that would lose the state for him, and must protect himself from those that will not lose it for him, if this is possible; but if he cannot, he need not concern himself unduly if he ignores these less serious vices. And, moreover, he need not worry about incurring the bad reputation of those vices without which it would be difficult to hold his state; since, carefully taking everything into account, one will discover that something which appears to be a virtue, if pursued, will end in his destruction; while some other thing which seems to be a vice, if pursued, will result in his safety and his well-being.

Prince must avoid reputation for the worst vices.

Some vices may be needed to hold the state. True?

Some virtues may end in destruction.

Description

The text reads, a prince (The word prince is underlined) who wishes to maintain his position to learn how not to be good (The text, to learn how not to be good, is underlined, and a margin note reads, Prince

must learn how not to be good), and to use this knowledge or not to use it according to necessity.

New paragraph. Leaving aside, therefore, the imagined things concerning a prince, and taking into account those that are true, I say that all men, when they are spoken of, and particularly princes, since they are placed on a higher level, are judged by some of these qualities which bring them either blame or praise. (The phrase blame or praise is underlined, and a margin note reads, Note the prince's reputation.) And this is why one is considered generous, another miserly (to use a Tuscan word, since open quotes avaricious close quotes in our language is still used to mean one who wishes to acquire by means of theft; we call open quotes miserly close quotes one who excessively avoids using what he has); one is considered a giver, the other rapacious; one cruel, another merciful; one treacherous, another faithful; one effeminate and cowardly, another bold and courageous; one humane, another haughty; one lascivious, another chaste; one trustworthy, another cunning; one harsh, another lenient; one serious, another frivolous; one religious, another unbelieving; and the like. And I know that everyone will admit that it would be a very praiseworthy thing to find in a prince, of the qualities mentioned above, those that are held to be good, but since it is neither possible to have them nor to observe them all completely, because human nature does not permit it, a prince must be prudent enough to know how to escape the bad reputation of those vices that would lose the state for him, and must protect himself from those that will not lose it for him, if this is possible; but if he cannot, he need not concern himself unduly if he ignores these less serious vices. (The text, a prince must be prudent enough to know how to escape the bad reputation of those vices that would lose the state for him, and must protect himself from those that will not lose it for him, if this is possible; but if he cannot, he need not concern himself unduly if he ignores these less serious vices, is underlined. A margin note reads, Prince must avoid reputation for the worst vices.) And, moreover, he need not worry about incurring the bad reputation of those vices without which it would be difficult to hold his state (The text, and, moreover, he need

not worry about incurring the bad reputation of those vices without which it would be difficult to hold his state is underlined, and a margin note reads, Some vices may be needed to hold the state. True?); since, carefully taking everything into account, one will discover that something which appears to be a virtue, if pursued, will end in his destruction (The text, one will discover that something which appears to be a virtue, if pursued, will end in his destruction, is underlined. A margin note reads, Some virtues may end in destruction); while some other thing which seems to be a vice, if pursued, will result in his safety and his well-being.

Reviewing the annotations in this essay, the following ideas are crucial to Machiavelli's thinking:

- The prince's profession should be war, so the most successful princes are probably experienced in the military.
- If they do not pay attention to military matters, princes will lose their power.
- Being disarmed makes the prince despised.
- The prince should be in constant training.
- The prince needs a sound knowledge of terrain.
- Machiavelli says he tells us what is true, not what ought to be true.
- Those who are always good will come to ruin among those who are not good.
- To remain in power, the prince must learn how not to be good.
- The prince should avoid the worst vices in order not to harm his reputation.
- To maintain power, some vices may be necessary.
- Some virtues may end in destruction.

Putting Machiavelli's ideas in this raw form does an injustice to his skill as a writer, but annotation is designed to result in such summary statements. We can see that there are some constant themes, such as the insistence that the prince be a military person. As the headnote tells us, in Machiavelli's day Italy was a group of rival city-states, and France, a larger, united nation, was invading these states one by one. Machiavelli dreamed that one powerful prince, such as his favorite, Cesare Borgia, could fight the French and save Italy. He emphasized the importance of the military because he lived in an age in which war was a constant threat.

Machiavelli anticipates the complaints of pacifists — those who argue against war — by telling us that those who remain unarmed are despised. To demonstrate his point, he gives examples of those who lost their positions as princes because they avoided being armed. He clearly expects these examples to be persuasive.

A second important theme pervading Machiavelli's essay is his view on moral behavior. For Machiavelli, being in power is much more important than being virtuous. He admits that vice is not desirable and that the worst vices will harm the prince's reputation. But he also says that the prince need not worry about the "less serious" vices. Moreover, the prince need not worry about incurring a bad reputation by practicing vices that are necessary if he wishes to hold his state. In the same spirit, Machiavelli tells us that there are some virtues that might lead to the destruction of the prince.

FORMING YOUR OWN IDEAS

One of the most important reasons for critically reading the texts in this book is to enable you to develop your own positions on issues that these writers raise. Identifying and clarifying the main ideas is only the first step; the next step in critical reading is evaluating those ideas.

For example, you might ask whether Machiavelli's ideas have any relevance for today. After all, he wrote nearly five hundred years ago, and times have changed. You might feel that Machiavelli was relevant strictly during the Italian Renaissance or, alternatively, that his principles are timeless and have something to teach every age. For most people, Machiavelli is a political philosopher whose views are useful anytime and anywhere.

If you agree with the majority, then you may want to examine Machiavelli's ideas to see whether you can accept them. Consider two of those ideas and their implications:

- Should rulers always be members of the military? Should they always be armed? Should the ruler of a nation first demonstrate competence as a military leader?
- Should rulers ignore virtue and practice vice when it is convenient?

In his commentary on government, which is also included in Part One, Lao-tzu offers different advice from Machiavelli because his assumptions are that the ruler ought to respect the rights of individuals. For Lao-tzu, waging war is an annoying, essentially

wasteful activity. Machiavelli, on the other hand, never questions the usefulness of war: to him, it is basic to government. As a critical reader, you can take issue with such an assumption, and in doing so you will deepen your understanding of Machiavelli.

If we were to follow Machiavelli's advice, we would choose American presidents on the basis of whether or not they had been good military leaders. Among those we would not have chosen might be Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Those who were high-ranking military men include George Washington, Ulysses S. Grant, and Dwight D. Eisenhower. If you followed Machiavelli's rhetorical technique of using examples to convince your audience, you could choose from either group to prove your case.

Of course, there are examples from other nations. It has been common since the 1930s to see certain leaders dressed in military uniforms: Benito Mussolini (Italy), Adolf Hitler (Germany), Joseph Stalin (the Soviet Union), Idi Amin (Uganda), Muammar al-Qaddafi (Libya), and Saddam Hussein (Iraq). These were all tyrants who tormented their citizens and their neighbors. That gives us something to think about. Should a president dress in full military regalia all the time? Is that a good image for the ruler of a free nation to project?

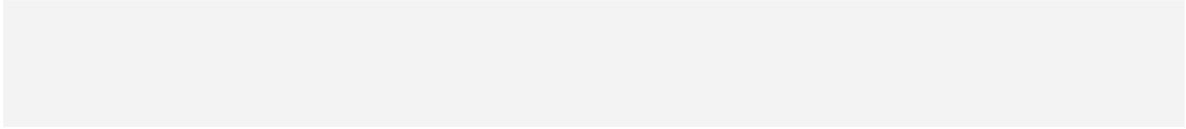
Do we want a ruler who is usually virtuous but embraces vice when it is necessary? This is a very difficult question to answer. President Richard Nixon tried to hide the Watergate break-in scandal, President Ronald Reagan did not reveal the details of the

Iran-Contra scandal, President Bill Clinton lied about his relations with Monica Lewinsky, and George W. Bush misrepresented intelligence to invade Iraq. Yet all these presidents are noted for important achievements while in office. How might Machiavelli have handled these problems differently? How much truthfulness do we expect from our presidents? How much do we deserve?

These are only a few of the questions that are raised by my annotations in the few pages from Machiavelli examined here. Many other issues could be uncovered by these annotations and many more from subsequent pages of the essay. Critical reading can be a powerful means by which to open what you read to discovery and discussion.

Once you begin a line of questioning, the ways in which you think about a passage begin expanding. You find yourself with more ideas of your own that have grown in response to those you have been reading about. Reading critically, in other words, gives you an enormous return on your investment of time. If you have the chance to investigate your responses to the assumptions and underlying premises of passages such as Machiavelli's, you will be able to refine your thinking even further. For example, if you agree with Machiavelli that rulers should be successful military leaders for whom small vices may be useful at times, and you find yourself arguing with someone who feels Machiavelli is mistaken in this view, then you will have a good opportunity to evaluate the soundness of your thinking. You will have a chance to see your own assumptions and arguments tested.

This entire book is about such opportunities. The essays that follow offer you powerful ideas from great thinkers. They invite you to participate in their thoughts, exercise your own knowledge and assumptions, and arrive at your own conclusions. Basically, that is the meaning of education.



Writing about Ideas

AN INTRODUCTION TO RHETORIC

WRITING ABOUT IDEAS has several functions. First, it makes our thinking available to others for examination. The writers whose works are presented in this book benefited from their first readers' examinations and at times revised their work considerably as a result of such criticism. Writing about ideas also helps us refine what we think — even without criticism from others — because writing is a self-instructional experience. We learn by writing in part because writing clarifies our thinking. When we think silently, we construct phrases and then reflect on them; when we speak, we both utter these phrases and sort them out in order to give our audience a tidier version of our thoughts. But spoken thought is difficult to sustain because we cannot review or revise what we said an hour earlier. Writing has the advantage of permitting us to expand our ideas, to work them through completely, and possibly to revise them in the light of later discoveries. It is by writing that we truly gain control over our ideas.

Generating Topics for Writing

Filled with sophisticated discussions of important ideas, the selections in this volume can endlessly stimulate your responses and writing. Reading the works of great thinkers can also be chastening to the point of making students feel sometimes that they have said it all and there is no room for your own thoughts. However, the suggestions that follow will assist you in writing your response to the ideas of an important thinker.

THINKING CRITICALLY: ASKING A QUESTION

One of the most reliable ways to start writing is to ask a question and then to answer it. In many ways, that is what the writers in this book have done again and again.

Francis Fukuyama uses a question for the title of his selection, "[Why Did Democracy Spread?](#)". Then, he uses the entire idea of questioning to help define why democracy spread but also to help him structure his essay. After reviewing the spread of democracy in South America, Asia, and eastern Europe, he asks several questions: "Why did these waves of democratization occur? Why did they occur in some regions and societies and not others? Why were some waves successful in establishing relatively stable democracies while others were rolled back? And why did democracy become a global phenomenon only during the twentieth century and not in the roughly four hundred prior centuries of human history?" Fukuyama makes an effort at answering these questions, and while doing so he lets us know

where he is going in the essay and what we can hope to learn. This strategy is both simple and effective.

Charles Darwin begins his meditation on the power of [natural selection](#), with the most obvious question: “How will the struggle for existence ... act in regard to variation? Can the principle of selection, which we have seen is so potent in the hands of man, apply in nature?” His previous discussion concerns the ways in which people can create variation in dogs by selecting for desirable traits, just as they do for variations in horses, livestock, flowers, and all vegetables used for food. If people can create variability, what happens when nature does it? Such questioning is at the center of all critical thinking.

As a writer stimulated by other thinkers, you can use the same technique. For example, turn back to the Machiavelli excerpt annotated in “[Evaluating Ideas: An Introduction to Critical Reading](#)”. All the annotations can easily be turned into questions. Any of the following questions, based on the annotations and our brief summary of the passage, could be the basis of an essay:

- Should a leader be armed?
- Is it true that an unarmed leader is despised?
- Will those leaders who are always good come to ruin among those who are not good?
- To remain in power, must a leader learn how not to be good?

One technique is to structure an essay around the answer to such a question. Another is to develop a series of questions and to

answer each of them in various parts of an essay. Yet another technique is to use the question indirectly — by answering it, but not in an obvious way. In “[Why the Rich Are Getting Richer and the Poor, Poorer](#)”, for example, Robert B. Reich answers a question we may not have asked. In the process he examines the nature of our current economy to see what it promises for different sectors of the population. His answer to the question concerns the shift in labor from manufacturing to information, revealing that “symbolic analysts” have the best opportunities in the future to amass wealth.

Many kinds of questions can be asked of a passage even as brief as the sample from Machiavelli. For one thing, we can limit ourselves to our annotations and go no further. But we also can reflect on larger issues and ask a series of questions that constitute a fuller inquiry. Out of that inquiry we can generate ideas for our own writing.

Two important ideas are isolated in our annotations. The first is that the prince must devote himself to war. In modern times, this implies that a president or other national leader must put matters of defense first — that a leader’s knowledge, training, and concerns must revolve around warfare. Taking that idea in general, we can develop other questions that, stimulated by Machiavelli’s selection, can be used to generate essays:

- Which modern leaders would Machiavelli support?
- Would Machiavelli approve of our current president?
- Do military personnel make the best leaders?

- Should our president have a military background?
- Could a modern state survive with no army or military weapons?
- What kind of a nation would we have if we did not stockpile nuclear weapons?

These questions derive from “The prince’s profession should be war,” the first idea that we isolate in the annotations. The next group of questions comes from the second idea, the issue of whether a leader can afford to be moral:

- Can virtues cause a leader to lose power?
- Is Machiavelli being cynical about morality, or is he being realistic (as he claims he is)? (We might also ask if Machiavelli uses the word *realistic* as a synonym for *cynical*.)
- Do most American leaders behave morally?
- Do most leaders believe that they should behave morally?
- Should our leaders be moral all the time?
- Which vices can we permit our leaders to have?
- Are there any vices we want our leaders to have?
- Which world leaders behave most morally? Are they the ones we most respect?
- Could a modern government govern well or at all if it were to behave morally in the face of immoral adversaries?

One reason for reading Machiavelli is to help us confront broad and serious questions. One reason for writing about these ideas is to help clarify our own positions on such important issues.

USING QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING AND SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

Every selection in this book is followed by a number of questions and a number of writing assignments. The questions are designed to help clarify the most important issues raised in the piece. Unlike the questions derived from annotation, their purpose is to stimulate classroom discussion so that you can benefit from hearing others' thoughts on these issues. Naturally, subjects for essays can arise from such discussion, but the discussion is most important for refining and focusing your ideas. The writing assignments, on the other hand, are explicitly meant to provide a useful starting point for producing an essay of five hundred to one thousand words.

A sample suggestion for writing about Machiavelli follows:

Machiavelli advises the prince to study history and reflect on the actions of great men. Do you support such advice? Machiavelli mentions a number of great leaders in his essay. Which leaders would you recommend a prince should study? How do you think Machiavelli would agree or disagree with your recommendations?

Like most of the suggestions for writing, this one can be approached in several ways. It can be broken down into three parts. The first question is whether it is useful to study, as Machiavelli does, the performance of past leaders. If you agree, then the second question asks you to name some leaders whose

behavior you would recommend studying. If you do not agree, you can point to the performance of some past leaders and explain why their study would be pointless today. Finally, the third question asks how you think Machiavelli would agree or disagree with your choices.

To deal successfully with this suggestion for writing, you could begin by giving your reasons for recommending that a political leader study “the actions of great men.” George Santayana once said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” That is, we study history in order not to have to live it over again. If you believe that a study of the past is important, the first part of an essay can answer the question of why such study could make a politician more successful.

The second part of the suggestion focuses on examples. In the sample from Machiavelli in “Evaluating Ideas,” we omitted the examples, but in the complete essay they are important for bringing Machiavelli’s point home. Few things can convince as completely as examples, so the first thing to do is to choose several leaders to work with. If you have studied a world leader, such as Indira Gandhi, Winston Churchill, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, or Margaret Thatcher, you could use that figure as one of your examples. If you have not done so, then use a research library’s sections on history and politics to find books or articles on one or two leaders and read them with an eye to establishing their usefulness for your argument. An Internet search can help you gather information efficiently. The central question you would seek to answer is how a world leader today could benefit from studying

the behavior and conduct of important historical and modern leaders.

The third part of the suggestion for writing — how Machiavelli would agree or disagree with you — is highly speculative. It invites you to look through the selection to find quotations or comments that indicate probable agreement or disagreement on Machiavelli's part. You can base your argument only on what Machiavelli says or implies, and this means that you will have to reread his essay to find evidence that will support your view.

In a sense, this part of the suggestion establishes a procedure for working with the writing assignments. Once you clarify the parts of the assignment and have some useful questions to guide you, and once you determine what research, if any, is necessary, the next step is to reread the selection to find the most appropriate information to help you write your own essay. One of the most important activities in learning how to write from these selections is to reread while paying close attention to the annotations that you've made in the margins of the essays. This is one way in which reading about significant ideas differs from reading for entertainment. Important ideas demand reflection and reconsideration. Rereading provides both.

Developing Ideas in Writing

QUESTIONING THE TEXT

In many ways, the authors of the selections that follow respond to important questions. Sometimes, as with Darwin's essay, there is one question that controls the entire piece, but in many of the selections there is a range of questions that seem to arise from other questions. That is the nature of inquiry, and it helps not only to shape the essay but also to focus our attention as we read it. By observing the nature of the texts that you read and the ways in which questions function as touchstones for the author, you can soon see how valuable the act of questioning can be for you as a writer. The selections in this book are often controversial and demand a response. When you question a text, you are responding to it, and your response can be used to develop ideas that can be the basis for your own writing.

Useful Questions

The following questions can be applied to virtually any important material that you read.

- What are the most important ideas presented in this selection?
- Is this article an argument, or is it simply an observation of fact?
- What is the main point being presented?
- What seems to be the author's purpose in writing this piece?
- Is the author's purpose explicit?
- What claim or claims does the author make?

- What specifically supports the author's claims?
- Does the author omit arguments and evidence that might contradict the claims?
- Does the author satisfactorily analyze and reject contradictory arguments?
- To what extent is there a bias for or against a position in the author's argument?
- What assumptions does the author make about his subject matter?
- Has the author provided clear support for the argument in terms of evidence, example, or expert testimony?
- Which details in the argument are the most important? Are they convincing?
- How significant is this argument for me personally? For society generally?

Questioning Freud

At the beginning of "[The Oedipus Complex](#)" by Sigmund Freud, three questions suggest points that the reader might use to focus attention on the essay:

- What is the Oedipus complex?
- How does it express itself in dreams?
- How do the examples of *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet* illustrate the Oedipus complex?

But these questions are not the same ones you might ask yourself after reading the essay. The most important question you would probably ask is,

- Is Freud right? Is there such a thing as an Oedipus complex?

Freud himself is answering a question indirectly: What is the cause of neurosis in the people he has psychoanalyzed? In response, he says that most mental illness arises from the role parents play in a person's childhood. Psychoneurotic children experience an unconscious love for their opposite-sex parent and a hatred for their same-sex parent. In the Greek drama for which the complex is named, Oedipus kills his father and marries his mother. In the Elizabethan drama by Shakespeare, Hamlet has an unnatural concern for his mother and kills the king, his stepfather. Here is how Freud opens his discussion:

In my experience, which is already extensive, the chief part in the mental lives of all children who later become psychoneurotics is played by their parents. Being in love with the one parent and hating the other are among the essential constituents of the stock of psychical impulses which is formed at that time and which is of such importance in determining the symptoms of the later neurosis. It is not my belief, however, that psychoneurotics differ sharply in this respect from other human beings who remain normal — that they are able, that is, to create something absolutely new and peculiar to themselves. It is far more probable — and this is confirmed by occasional observations on normal children — that they are only distinguished by exhibiting on a magnified scale feelings of love and hatred to their parents which occur less obviously and less intensely in the minds of most children. ([para. 1](#))

Sample Questions

Here are a few questions that naturally arise from reading Freud's opening paragraph:

- Does Freud claim that parents play a major role in the neuroses of their children?
- Do children seem to grow up hating one parent and loving the other?
- Does my experience help support Freud's views, or does it contradict them?
- When they grow up, are psychoneurotics who suffer from the Oedipus complex likely to kill one of their parents?
- Could Freud's "occasional observations" of children confirm the wide-ranging claim that he makes?
- How do normal children seem to differ from neurotic children?

Once you have read the entire passage, you will formulate other questions that should help you develop ideas of your own as to whether or not what Freud says makes good sense to you.

Oedipus complex is a term that is used often, and sometimes irresponsibly, so it is important for you to decide how valid Freud's thinking is. Once you have read Freud's entire discussion — an argument that employs important examples to support its claim that parents play a major role in the neuroses of their children — you will want to consider the examples carefully. Here are some questions that might be useful after reading the essay:

- Does a discussion of fictitious characters help us understand a cause of neurosis?
- Is Hamlet a neurotic who fits Freud's description?
- Did Oedipus's parents cause his problems?
- Is Oedipus a neurotic?
- If Oedipus and Hamlet are clearly neurotic, does that prove Freud's theory?

You could probably add more questions to these two lists, and if you do, you will be helping yourself not only to better understand the selection but also to better approach your own writing about the piece.

A Sample Beginning for a Brief Essay on Freud

The following paragraphs are the beginning of an essay in response to Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex. A few of the questions above are implied in this sample.

MY OEDIPUS COMPLEX

Freud's theory of the Oedipus Complex is a bit unsettling for me. I grew up knowing that I loved my father more than I loved my mother. It was not a really major difference, but it was noticeable to my younger brother, who says he can relate to our mother more than to our father. According to Freud, that seems to be the pattern of the Oedipus complex, but neither I nor my brother have mental problems. Should I be worried? Should my brother be worried? I hope not, but I'm not entirely sure. After reading about Oedipus and Hamlet, I realize that they are extreme cases, what Freud says is on "a magnified scale." There is nothing magnified about my relation with my dad, who drove me to school and met my roommates and took us to dinner and then went home. My mother stayed home with my brother, Tim, and that's what usually happens.

But there have been some things that I see now may be problems that my brother may have that I don't have. For example, Tim no longer goes with Dad to fish or to hunt in spring and fall. Now I can see how disappointed Dad has been to see that Tim does not want to do some of the same things he does. Mom likes to go to plays, which I don't usually have time for, so Tim goes with her, and I think he really enjoys them. Dad and I would rather go to a movie, and when I was in middle school we used to see action adventure films that Mom didn't like. Dad and I are more interested in the same kinds of things than are Tim and Mom, who like different things. Is this normal, or should I be worried that sometime in the future Tim will suddenly explode and let go on Dad? Or that I will on Mom? Should I be frightened?

–Alice F.

The rest of the essay examines Alice's and Tim's relationships with their parents and compares them with Freud's examples. Alice aimed at establishing what she thought were normal patterns of behavior toward parents by questioning some of her roommates and discussing how the literary examples Freud chose were convincing on one level but needed to be balanced with Alice's own experience.

Questioning Carnegie

Alice's essay was primarily a personal response to a theory that she was trying to understand. The following is an examination of a

problem in political and economic terms that affects many of us. The economic debate today is often posed in terms of inequity — the fact that in recent decades the ultra-rich have come to control an exorbitant amount of the wealth of the nation, with perhaps more than 90 percent of the wealth in the hands of less than 5 percent of the people. For [Robert Reich](#), whose selection examines the process of the wealthy growing more wealthy, the problem of economic inequality is serious and perhaps political.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, [Andrew Carnegie](#) was one of the richest men in the world — he controlled massive wealth and wielded extraordinary influence. Like many of modern society's ultra-rich, he made his money by taking advantage of new technologies and remarkable opportunities. Also like many of today's ultra-rich, he felt that he deserved his wealth because he felt himself to be in many ways a superior person.

In the following paragraph, Carnegie praises the current situation in society that allows an individual to amass as much wealth as possible. He regards possession of such wealth as a hallmark of advanced civilization:

Objections to the foundations upon which society is based are not in order, because the condition of the race is better with these than it has been with any others which have been tried. Of the effect of any new substitutes proposed we cannot be sure. The Socialist or Anarchist who seeks to overturn present conditions is to be regarded as attacking the foundation upon which civilization itself rests, for civilization took its start from the day that the capable, industrious workman said to his incompetent and lazy fellow, "If thou dost not sow, thou shalt not reap,"

and thus ended primitive Communism by separating the drones from the bees. One who studies this subject will soon be brought face to face with the conclusion that upon the sacredness of property civilization itself depends — the right of the laborer to his hundred dollars in the savings-bank, and equally the legal right of the millionaire to his millions. To those who propose to substitute Communism for this intense Individualism the answer, therefore, is: the race has tried that. All progress from that barbarous day to the present time has resulted from its displacement. Not evil, but good, has come to the race from the accumulation of wealth by those who have the ability and energy that produce it. But even if we admit for a moment that it might be better for the race to discard its present foundation, Individualism — that it is a nobler ideal that man should labor, not for himself alone, but in and for a brotherhood of his fellows, and share with them all in common, realizing Swedenborg's idea of Heaven, where, as he says, the angels derive their happiness, not from laboring for self, but for each other — even admit all this, and a sufficient answer is, This is not evolution, but revolution. It necessitates the changing of human nature itself — a work of aeons, even if it were good to change it, which we cannot know. It is not practicable in our day or in our age. Even if desirable theoretically, it belongs to another and long--succeeding sociological stratum. ([para. 7](#))

Sample Questions

Many of the issues Carnegie treats in this passage require close examination and a serious response because they assume important truths about our society. Carnegie's assumptions about the way our civilization should work may have been reasonable when this essay was written in 1889, but we may question whether those assumptions are still relevant today. As a start, here are a few questions this paragraph raises:

- Why does the socialist attack the foundations of society?

- Why did civilization get its start from “If thou dost not sow, thou shalt not reap”?
- Who are the “drones” and who are the “bees” in civilization?
- Why does civilization depend on the sacredness of property?
- What is “primitive Communism”?
- What are the rights of laborers and millionaires?
- What does Carnegie mean by “intense Individualism”?
- How does the accumulation of wealth produce good rather than evil?
- Why is the idea of sharing in common revolution rather than evolution?
- What does Carnegie mean by “human nature”?
- Why would socialism need to change human nature?

A Sample Beginning for a Brief Essay on Carnegie

Carnegie argues earlier in this essay that the dramatic inequity between the rich and the poor is an example of the progress of the human race. For instance, he comments on a visit to the Sioux in which he visited the chief only to find that the chief lived in a simple dwelling that was almost identical with every other dwelling. On that basis, Carnegie felt that the Sioux were primitive people and that Carnegie’s society was advanced. As a strong believer in evolution, Carnegie saw the production of wealth as an example of evolution and progress. While not everyone today might agree with Carnegie, there are arguments on both sides of the issue. In the beginning of the following brief essay, some other specific questions led the author to a consideration of Carnegie’s views:

- Is Carnegie's argument a defense of capitalism?
- Is the amassing of great wealth a natural result of the progress of society?
- Why should the laborer be content with his hundreds?
- How do the values of individualism compare with the values of community or collectivism?
- Why does Carnegie call property a sacred right?

The following is the beginning of an essay that takes issue with Carnegie's position.

INDIVIDUALISM AND PROGRESS

Andrew Carnegie defends his style of capitalism by telling us that communism is typical of primitive societies and that capitalism is a natural evolution. Over time, individualism operates to separate the "drones from the bees." Most people, who do not have the skills to produce wealth, are the drones, while the bees who do the work transform society, which is one of his main ideas. Those who produce wealth deserve their millions because without them there would be no millions. Carnegie emphasizes that all of society benefits from its millionaires by saying, "Today the world obtains commodities of excellent quality at prices which even the generation preceding this would have deemed incredible" ([para. 3](#)). Some of what Carnegie says is true because we can see that average people in developed societies today enjoy comforts that only royalty could enjoy hundreds of years ago.

However, Carnegie does not discuss the ways in which he amassed his wealth. It is true that he gave away most of his money before he died, and it is also true that he endowed colleges and libraries. But an examination of the way in which he made his money shows that he did all he could to make sure his workers had low-paying jobs because he felt that, being drones, they would not know how to spend their money if he raised their wages. In other words, he was sure that he deserved his wealth because he thought himself superior to his laborers, who he thought should be content with what he gave them. In “The Gospel of Wealth,” he is not only defending capitalism as he understood it but also defending his view of himself as almost god-like in his ability to make millions and thereby dictate what is good for the rest of the people. Calling his essay a “Gospel” tells us that he speaks from on high to the lowly people who are not millionaires like him.

Today there are more millionaires and billionaires like Carnegie than there were in the 1870s. Most of them have avoided writing essays such as Carnegie did, but most of them still defend the view that “upon the sacredness of property civilization itself depends” ([para. 7](#)). Like Carnegie, they spend time defending their rights to their wealth, asking, “Since when has it become a crime to be wealthy in America?” Meanwhile, as Robert Reich says, the poor get poorer while the rich defend individualism and, to an extent, pay little attention to the relief of the growing numbers of those living at the poverty level. The defense of extravagant

wealth is not as easy today as it was when Carnegie wrote his essay.

–Margaret B.

This writer was influenced by the current discussion of the shrinking of the middle class and also by the essay by Reich called “[Why the Rich Are Getting Richer and the Poor, Poorer](#)”. She saw that some of what Carnegie said could be defended, such as that modern industry produced a great many comforts for the average person. But she also criticized Carnegie’s sense of entitlement to extreme wealth because he regarded himself as superior. She was concerned that Carnegie, despite his contributions to the nation’s culture, did little to relieve the day-to-day limitations of low wages that characterized the late nineteenth century in America. Ironically, Carnegie’s portrait of the Sioux chief living like the rest of his people stands in stark contrast to Margaret’s portrait of Carnegie living like an emperor while the rest of his people lived much like the Sioux chief’s people.

Margaret used many questions to establish ways to examine the selection critically in order to produce a useful essay.

CREATING A THESIS STATEMENT

One of the most important steps in writing an essay is creating your thesis. Sometimes you will be able to approach your first draft with a thesis in mind, and sometimes you will not discover

your thesis until you have reread the selection you are responding to as well as your own first draft.

Your thesis statement is an assertion that will be made good by the specifics of your essay. The specifics may include references to facts, to the opinions of other important writers, or to your analysis of the text itself. What should not be among the specifics is your own unsupported opinion. Your thesis statement makes a claim that you back up with careful use of evidence and testimony.

Your thesis may come at the beginning of your essay, as is typical, or it may appear in the middle or at the end. Some professional writers spread their thesis throughout the essay as a series of claims, but the best way to start a brief essay is by telling your reader what you are asserting and how you plan to support those assertions.

In the selections in this book you will find several different kinds of thesis statements that demonstrate the range and complexity of theses.

- **A thesis that states a position** In “[Of the Pernicious Effects Which Arise from the Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society](#),” Mary Wollstonecraft opens with one of her most famous assertions: “One class presses on another; for all are aiming to procure respect on account of their property: and property, once gained, will procure the respect due only to talents and virtues.” Wollstonecraft then proceeds to examine the way in which women’s talents and virtues are ignored by those who possess the most property.

- **A thesis that establishes a cause** Dambisa Moyo begins her discussion of [economic forces in modern Europe](#) by focusing on what economic growth implies for the average citizen: “growth matters — powerfully — to ordinary people. When economic growth wanes, everyone suffers. Stagnation exacerbates numerous social, health, environmental, and political problems. The very essence of culture, community, and people’s individual expectations about the kinds of lives they can lead become dimmer, coarser, and smaller in the absence of growth.” Moyo goes on to argue that the absence of growth leads to stagnation and a lower living standard. This thesis helps focus her argument.
- **A thesis that states an opinion** In [“The Gospel of Wealth”](#), Carnegie asserts, “The problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth, so that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship.” Carnegie’s first sentence expresses his opinion that the “administration of wealth” is the “problem of our age.” With so many problems of any age, this statement will need a great deal of support from Carnegie’s analysis of the recent events and the circumstances of his time.
- **A thesis that analyzes circumstance** For this example, we turn to a passage by Virginia Woolf: “But for women, I thought, looking at the empty shelves, these difficulties were infinitely more formidable. In the first place, to have a room of her own, let alone a quiet room or a sound-proof room, was out of the question, unless her parents were exceptionally rich or very noble, even up to the beginning of the nineteenth century.” This statement, Woolf’s famous “A Room of Her Own” declaration in [“Shakespeare’s Sister”](#), comes deep in her essay ([para. 12](#)), after her careful discussion of the

history of Shakespeare's time and her analysis of the difficulties any woman of genius would have had trying to become a noted author of important books or plays.

- **A thesis that defines a condition** Barbara Ehrenreich begins her essay "[Is the Middle Class Doomed?](#)" with: "most of us are 'middle-class,' or so we like to believe. But there are signs that America is becoming a more divided society: over the last decade, the rich have been getting richer; the poor have been getting more numerous; and those in the middle do not appear to be doing as well as they used to. If America is 'coming back,' as President Reagan reassured us in the wake of the economic malaise of the early 1980s, it may be coming back in a harsh and alien form." She then goes on to compare the economic growth of the poorest fifth of the American population and the richest fifth. The comparison shows a considerable difference in these groups, and Ehrenreich's conclusion is that the baby boomers may have a much harder time making their incomes grow than their parents did.
- **A thesis that establishes a conclusion** In "[The Personal and the Collective Unconscious](#)", Carl Jung explores the unconscious mind through dream analysis and waits until the end to state his thesis, which he feels is a reasonable conclusion to his discussion: "I have therefore advanced the hypothesis that at its deeper levels the unconscious possesses collective contents in a relatively active state. That is why I speak of the collective unconscious." The collective unconscious, he says earlier in the piece, contains archetypal patterns that most people in a given culture will experience in their dreams. In the larger body of his work, he asserts that

these archetypes are universal and inherited as part of our mental biology.

Your Thesis Statement

Generally, your own thesis statement will be more direct and assertive than those of the writers in this book. One of the best ways for you to start is by creating a thesis statement that establishes your writing aims. A good modern thesis statement tells your reader what to expect from your essay and controls the scope and focus of your writing, making it easier for you and your reader to know what you are trying to say and when you are finished saying it.

Your thesis identifies your subject and what you want to say about it. Put in a slightly different way, your thesis identifies what is to be argued, explained, or focused on in your writing. It may tell your reader what your approach is and give a hint of your conclusions. In a sense, it acts as a signpost for your writing, guiding your reader through the rest of your essay.

Suggestions for Formulating a Thesis

Most of the time, creating a strong, clear thesis before writing is not a luxury but a necessity. Good writers realize that as it develops a thesis statement is dynamic, not carved in stone, not static and permanent. Just as every aspect of your writing is subject to review and revision, the thesis is capable of being recast again and again, especially if you change your position as

you argue your case. In that situation, your changed position would dictate that a new thesis statement be written.

You have several choices regarding the form of your thesis statement. For one, you may wish to break it into several sentences or craft it as a self-contained single sentence. Further, you may choose to state your thesis plainly and openly — especially if your primary purpose is to be clear in what you are writing — or you may choose to imply it. To some extent, the choice of whether or not to use a strong thesis statement depends on your purpose as a writer. A clearly formulated thesis statement is most useful when your purpose is to persuade or to inform. An implied thesis is more commonly used in an expressive piece of writing in which the end purpose of informing or persuading is either secondary or omitted. Whatever your purpose, the concept of the thesis statement should be regarded as dynamic. There is not just one kind of thesis any more than there is just one place to state it.

Sample Theses

A thesis needs defense, elaboration, example, support, and development. For that reason, the thesis is not always a declarative factual statement. Rather, it is a statement that permits you to explore the issues that interest you and identify the key elements that will constitute your essay. A thesis can be stated in a single sentence or in a group of sentences or phrases. The point is that it shows what your concerns are and how you plan to approach discussing them.

The following sample thesis statements are appropriate for brief essays. They all stake some kind of claim and have the potential to be developed into full-length pieces of writing.

- Because of his belief that people benefit from governing their own behavior and should oppose unjust laws, it is clear that Martin Luther King Jr. would have championed the cause of Mary Wollstonecraft.
- Although Andrew Carnegie may be correct in saying that “We start, then, with the condition of affairs under which the best interests of the race are promoted, but which inevitably gives wealth to the few” ([para. 8](#)). However, this does not necessarily mean that the few should control 90 percent of the wealth in a country. While the wealthy few may deserve their gains, they do not serve the best interests of the community by retaining it for their own use. Revolution has usually occurred in nations in which the wealthy few ignore the economic needs of the majority poor.
- F. A. Hayek in “[Economic Control and Totalitarianism](#)” says that a socialist system would require planning of the economy and that the economy affects a great deal of our lives. He says, “economic planning would involve direction of almost the whole of our life” ([para. 8](#)), but it seems to me that in nations like Sweden and Denmark the planning does not control everything. People in these countries are said to be the happiest in Europe and do not suffer from totalitarianism.
- Andrew Carnegie would be very pleased with the distribution of wealth in our country today because it is approximately the same as it was in his time. He would have specifically approved of the decisions of Bill Gates and Warren Buffett to give away their wealth posthumously to benefit the public.

Here are my suggestions for how their money should be spent.

- Diane Ravitch complains that the richest schools get the best curriculum and the poorest get the worst. She asks, “Why is the richest nation in the world unable to provide a full curriculum for all students in public schools?” ([para. 10](#)). One reason, I think, is that the federal programs, such as “No Child Left Behind,” seem to stress skills more than general learning. My experience in grade school and high school supports Ravitch’s description of what is happening in schools across the country.
- The writer who I feel is most in sympathy with Barbara Ehrenreich’s views in “Is the Middle Class Doomed?” is Dambisa Moyo. Moyo, in her essay, “Economic Growth Matters to Ordinary People,” makes it clear that the continued existence of a middle class depends on economic growth. I will show how Moyo and Ehrenreich support each other’s positions on the power of economics in the life of ordinary people.

Supporting Your Thesis

Each of these statements is flexible enough to appear at the beginning of an essay — within the first paragraph — or somewhere deeper in the piece. Each has the advantage of implying what is to follow. In the first case, the writer’s job is to analyze King’s views in order to connect them with Wollstonecraft’s. The fact that they are both classic authors will help with the argument, but the challenge is to show that King felt women should enjoy the equality that Wollstonecraft felt was the only just position that society could take. The writer’s thesis needs

support to make it effective. Here are some points from King's essay that support the thesis:

- When Wollstonecraft declares that civil laws forbidding women to control property are unnatural and therefore have no force, King plainly agrees, having himself written that unjust laws exist and that we have a choice of whether to obey them.
- Wollstonecraft calls for change, and King agrees with her when he says, speaking of those who have protested with him in Birmingham, “Unlike so many of their moderate brothers and sisters, they have recognized the urgency of the moment and sensed the need for powerful ‘action’ antidotes to combat the disease of segregation” ([para. 32](#)). Wollstonecraft's view is that the time for action is now, not later, and in that, King agrees.
- King says, “We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed” ([para. 13](#)). Wollstonecraft would agree with that idea but amend it to say, “Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers — in a word, better citizens” ([para. 34](#)). King would certainly applaud that idea.

These examples are happy ones in that they help the writer shape the remainder of the essay. However, every thesis statement represents a claim, and in order to make the claim stick, the writer has to provide warrants that support the claim. In other words,

what are the truths that warrant a writer's claim that King would have been likely to support Wollstonecraft? The rest of the essay must answer that question.

A successful thesis must be accompanied by

- evidence that supports the thesis, either from the selection or from outside sources, either factual or drawn from the opinions of experts;
- statements and testimony from authoritative texts that address the thesis concept;
- careful and balanced analysis of the text of the author in question;
- discussion and analysis of counterarguments that might alter the thesis.

No matter how it is supported, you must realize that your thesis statement is dynamic: it can change. The best thesis statements will establish your purpose and restrict the scope of your essay. A good thesis statement will also reveal some of your conclusions and clarify your approach to your subject. And ultimately, the whole purpose of the thesis is to give you — and your reader — a clear sense of direction for your writing.

Methods of Development

Every selection in this book — whether by Francis Bacon or Virginia Woolf, Frederick Douglass or Karl Marx — employs specific rhetorical techniques that help the author communicate important ideas. Each introduction identifies the special rhetorical techniques used by the writer, partly to introduce you to the way in which such techniques are used.

Rhetoric is a general term used to discuss effective writing techniques. For example, an interesting rhetorical technique that Machiavelli uses is illustration by example, usually to prove his points. [Francis Bacon](#) uses the technique of enumeration by partitioning his essay into four sections. Enumeration is especially useful when the writer wishes to be very clear or to cover a subject point by point, using each point to accumulate more authority in the discussion. [Martin Luther King Jr.](#) uses the technique of allusion, reminding the religious leaders who were his audience that St. Paul wrote similar letters to help early Christians better understand the nature of their faith. By alluding to the Bible and St. Paul, King effectively reminds his audience that they all were serving God.

A great many more rhetorical techniques may be found in these readings. Some of the techniques are familiar because many of us already use them, but we study them to understand their value and to use them more effectively. After all, rhetorical techniques make it possible for us to communicate the significance of important ideas. Many of the authors in this book would surely

admit that the effect of their ideas actually depends on the way they are expressed, which is a way of saying that they depend on the rhetorical methods used to express them.

Most of the rhetorical methods used in these essays are discussed in the introductions to the individual selections. Several represent exceptionally useful general techniques. These are methods of development and represent approaches to developing ideas that contribute to the fullness and completeness of an essay. You may think of them as techniques that can be applied to any idea in almost any situation. They can expand on the idea, clarify it, express it, and demonstrate its truth or effectiveness. Sometimes a technique may be direct, sometimes indirect. Sometimes it calls attention to itself, sometimes it works behind the scenes. Sometimes it is used alone, sometimes in conjunction with other methods. The most important techniques are explained and then illustrated with examples from the selections in the book:

- Definition
- Comparison
- Example
- Analysis of Cause and Effect
- Analysis of Circumstance
- Analysis of Quotations

DEVELOPMENT BY DEFINITION

Definition is essential for two purposes: to make certain that you have a clear grasp of your concepts and that you communicate a clear understanding to your reader. Definition goes far beyond the

use of the dictionary in the manner of “According to Webster’s, . . .” Such an approach is facile because complex ideas are not easily reduced to dictionary definitions. A more useful strategy is to offer an explanation followed by an example. Because some of the suggestions for writing that follow the selections require you to use definition as a means of writing about ideas, the following tips should be kept in mind:

- Definition can be used to develop a paragraph, a section, or an entire essay.
- It considers questions of function, purpose, circumstance, origin, and implications for different groups.
- Explanations and examples make all definitions more complete and effective.

It is not uncommon for an entire essay to devote itself to the act of definition. For example, James Gleick’s essay “[What Is Time?](#)” addresses itself to defining this abstruse subject in an extensive discussion. However, more often a key idea is defined within the essay, as in Barbara Ehrenreich’s “[Is the Middle Class Doomed?](#)”. After describing the distribution of income and wealth, and after a brief historical description, she offers a workable brief definition:

“Middle-class” can be defined in several ways. Statistically, the middle class is simply the part of the population that earns near the median income — say, the 20 percent that earns just above the median income plus the 20 percent whose earnings fall just below it. But in colloquial understanding, “middle-class” is a matter of status as well as income, and is signaled by subtler cues — how we live, what we spend our money on, what expectations we have for the future. Since the postwar period, middle-class status has been defined by home ownership, college

education (at least for the children), and the ability to afford amenities such as a second car and family vacations. ([para. 14](#))

Ehrenreich's definition may or may not be adequate for you, so one of the interesting things you can do with this definition is to expand it or take issue with it. Also, since it has been some years since Ehrenreich wrote this essay, you may want to write your own essay defining the modern view of what constitutes the middle class.

An essay on the annotated selection from Machiavelli might define a number of key ideas. For example, to argue that Machiavelli is cynical in suggesting that his prince would not retain power if he acted morally, we would need to define what it means to be cynical and what moral behavior means in political terms. When we argue any point, it is important to spend time defining key ideas.

King, in "[Letter from Birmingham Jail](#)", takes time to establish some key definitions so that he can speak forcefully to his audience:

Let us consider a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself. This is *difference* made legal. By the same token, a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow and that it is willing to follow itself. This is *sameness* made legal. ([para. 17](#))

This is an adequate definition as far as it goes, but most serious ideas need more extensive definition than this passage gives us.

And King does go further, providing what Machiavelli does in his essay: examples and explanations. Every full definition will profit from the extension of understanding that an explanation and example will provide. Consider this paragraph from King:

Let me give another explanation. A law is unjust if it is inflicted on a minority that, as a result of being denied the right to vote, had no part in enacting or devising the law. Who can say that the legislature of Alabama which set up that state's segregation laws was democratically elected? Throughout Alabama all sorts of devious methods are used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters, and there are some counties in which, even though Negroes constitute a majority of the population, not a single Negro is registered. Can any law enacted under such circumstances be considered democratically structured? ([para. 18](#))

King makes us aware of the fact that definition is complex and capable of great subtlety. It is an approach that can be used to develop a paragraph or an essay.

The following excerpt is by a student writer whose essay is developed using the method of definition. Using Aristotle's idea in "[The Aim of Man](#)" that "all knowledge and all purpose" aims at the good, and that the ultimate good is happiness, this student attempts a brief definition of happiness.

Aristotle says that most people think happiness is the greatest good, but he also says that people don't seem to agree on what happiness is. He says that "to live well and do well" is one definition. Another might be more along the line of not what you do so much as what you feel. When you feel a satisfaction for having helped someone or having made a

positive difference in someone else's quest for something important, you would probably agree that you feel happy. I think that happiness is not a solitary thing—one can only be happy in relation to others and maybe you are happiest when you share a major achievement with someone else.

–Rashida J.

In this case, the writer goes on to discuss specific instances in which she and others spent their time helping a local politician running for office. She and those she worked with had many difficulties and problems, which she describes. They expected defeat, but because of the hard work they had done, the representative won. She was particularly happy when her work paid off, but she was even more happy to be with others who had contributed to the victory and were also happy.

DEVELOPMENT BY COMPARISON

Comparison is a natural operation of the mind. We rarely talk for long about any topic without comparing it with something else. We are fascinated with comparisons between ourselves and others and come to know ourselves better as a result of such comparisons. Machiavelli, for example, compares the armed with the unarmed prince and shows us, by means of examples, the results of being unarmed.

Comparison usually includes the following:

- a definition of two or more elements to be compared (by example, explanation, description, or any combination of these),
- discussion of shared qualities,
- discussion of unique qualities, and
- a clear reason for making the comparison.

Virginia Woolf's primary rhetorical strategy in "[Shakespeare's Sister](#)" is to invent a comparison between Shakespeare and a fictional sister that he never had. Woolf's point is that if indeed Shakespeare had had a sister who was as brilliant and gifted as he was, she could not have become famous like her brother. The Elizabethan environment would have expected her to remain uneducated and to serve merely as a wife and mother. In the sixteenth century, men like Shakespeare could go to London and make their fortune. Women, in comparison, were prisoners of social attitudes regarding their sex. As Woolf tells us,

He was, it is well known, a wild boy who poached rabbits, perhaps shot a deer, and had, rather sooner than he should have done, to marry a woman in the neighborhood, who bore him a child rather quicker than was right. That escapade sent him to seek his fortune in London. He had, it seemed, a taste for the theatre; he began by holding horses at the stage door. Very soon he got work in the theatre, became a successful actor, and lived at the hub of the universe, meeting everybody, knowing everybody, practicing his art on the boards, exercising his wits in the streets, and even getting access to the palace of the queen. Meanwhile his extraordinarily gifted sister, let us suppose, remained at home. She was as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school. She had no chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of reading Horace and Virgil. She picked up a book now and then, one of her brother's perhaps, and read a few pages. But

then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers. ([para. 7](#))

Woolf's comparison makes it clear that the social circumstances of the life of a woman in Shakespeare's time worked so much against her personal desires and ambitions that it would be all but impossible for her to achieve anything of distinction on the London stage — or in any other venue in which men dominated. Even though a woman was monarch of England, it was a man's world.

A natural comparison can be made between Freud's "[The Oedipus Complex](#)" and Jung's "[The Personal and the Collective Unconscious](#)". The following writer begins his essay trying to work out the comparison because he sees that these selections tend to reinforce each other even though Freud and Jung were often in disagreement.

Even though Carl Jung seems to be treating the idea of the unconscious differently from Sigmund Freud, I think that they have more in common than they seem to. For example, when Jung talks about the collective unconscious containing archetypes that are supposed to be universal, Freud seems to be talking about just such an archetype. His discussion of the Oedipus complex seems to me to show the pattern he describes — of the child loving one parent and hating the other — to be a basic archetype of human behavior. I may be wrong, but if it is not an archetype, what is it? Both Sophocles and Shakespeare, almost two thousand years apart, came up with basically the same idea. Jung does not refer to Freud's

examples, but he sees archetypes the way Freud does. They both think the archetypes are built in to us as people.

–Brian J.

DEVELOPMENT BY EXAMPLE

Examples make abstract ideas concrete. When Machiavelli talks about looking at history to learn political lessons, he cites specific cases and brings them to the attention of his audience, the prince. Thomas Jefferson in [the Declaration of Independence](#) devotes most of his text to examples of the unacceptable behavior of the English king toward the colonies. [Molly Haskell](#) structures her essay on examples mainly, but not exclusively, from literature. She discusses stories from the Roman poet Ovid, who wrote about Tiresias, who had been given the chance by the gods to be first man, then woman. When asked which gender had more joy in sex, he said women do. But when he had the chance, he returned to being male. Haskell points to several other examples in Roman literature, such as the story of Callisto and a gender-shifting god who seduced her. She then goes on to discuss the transsexual experience in sex, while also examining transvestism in a variety of cultures. Shakespeare is also one of the main examples she uses in trying to answer the question of who has it better, men or women.

Examples need to be chosen carefully because the burden of proof and of explanation and clarity often depends on them. When

the sample suggestion given earlier for writing on Machiavelli's essay asks who among modern world leaders Machiavelli would approve of, it is asking for carefully chosen examples. When doing research for an essay, it is important to be sure that your example or examples really suit your purposes.

Examples can be used in several ways. One is to do as [Darwin](#) does and present a large number of examples that force readers to a given conclusion. This indirect method is sometimes time-consuming, but the weight of numerous examples can be effective. A second method, such as Machiavelli's, also can be effective. By making a statement that is controversial or questionable and that can be tested by example, you can lead your audience to draw a reasonable conclusion.

When using examples, keep these points in mind:

- Choose a few strong examples that support your point.
- Be concrete and specific — naming names, citing events, and giving details where necessary.
- Develop each example as fully as possible, and point out its relevance to your position.

In some selections, such as Darwin's discussion of natural selection, the argument hinges entirely on examples, and Darwin cites one example after another. [Jung](#), however, concentrates on a single example when he begins to explain the nature of the collective unconscious. He establishes that Freud's view of the nature of the unconscious mind is centered on the personal and

sees it as a result of the repression of material that he calls “incompatible” with the conscious mind of the individual. During childhood bad things happen, and we repress them as we grow up. Sometimes these repressions cause psychic damage, and sometimes they do not. Usually they surface in dreams that are personal in nature. But Jung is sure that the unconscious is collective and not only personal. As a way of arguing his case, he presents us with an example of a “father complex” that could be virtually universal in nature:

Casting about in my mind for an example to illustrate what I have just said, I have a particularly vivid memory of a woman patient with a mild hysterical neurosis which, as we expressed it in those days, had its principal cause in a “father complex.” By this we wanted to denote the fact that the patient’s peculiar relationship to her father stood in her way. She had been on very good terms with her father, who had since died. It was a relationship chiefly of feeling. In such cases it is usually the intellectual function that is developed, and this later becomes the bridge to the world. Accordingly our patient became a student of philosophy. Her energetic pursuit of knowledge was motivated by her need to extricate herself from the emotional entanglement with her father. ([para. 5](#))

Jung develops this example extensively. This paragraph is more than a page and a half long, and Jung continues his discussion of the example for another page because he sees it as a key to his argument.

Considering the claim that [Reich](#) makes about symbolic analysts, the following writer develops his ideas about what work those analysts do and who in his immediate college environment would qualify as symbolic analysts. This paragraph is within an essay

that explores the idea of the symbolic analyst and takes the position that Reich is accurate in his analysis.

Symbolic analysts work with ideas, not with their hands. But as Robert B. Reich says, there are higher and lower symbolic analysts and their economic success will be different depending on who they are. Reich talks about some analysts getting incredibly rich, and I think he means analysts like Mark Zuckerberg, who worked with computer symbols and came up with the idea for Facebook. Some of my friends who major in computer science expect that they may be able to develop ideas that will make them rich or at least help them find good jobs as coders. But there are other symbolic analysts like my friends who major in history. They also analyze symbols, but I'm not sure there will be a good market for their talents even though they know a lot and enjoy what they do. I think they might have to get an MBA or a law degree, both of which would make them symbolic analysts who can earn a living.

–Hector D.

DEVELOPMENT BY ANALYSIS OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

People are interested in causes. We often ask what causes something, as if understanding the cause will somehow help us accept the result. Yet cause and effect can be subtle. With

definition, comparison, and example, we can feel that the connections between a specific topic and our main points are reasonable. With cause and effect, however, we need to reason out the cause. Be warned that development by analysis of cause and effect requires you to pay close attention to the terms and situations you write about. Because it is easy to be wrong about causes and effects, their relationship must be examined thoughtfully. After an event has occurred, only a hypothesis about its cause may be possible. In the same sense, if no effect has been observed, only speculation about outcomes with various plans of action may be possible. In both cases, reasoning and imagination must be employed to establish a relationship between cause and effect.

The power of the rhetorical method of development through cause and effect is such that you will find it in every section of this book, in the work of virtually every author. Keep in mind these suggestions for using it to develop your own thinking:

- Clearly establish in your own mind the cause and the effect you wish to discuss.
- Develop a good line of reasoning that demonstrates the relationship between the cause and the effect.
- Be sure that the cause–effect relationship is real and not merely apparent.

In studying nature, scientists often examine effects in an effort to discover causes. [Darwin](#), for instance, sees the comparable structure of the skeletons of many animals of different species and

makes every effort to find the cause of such similarity ([p. 738](#)). His answer is a theory: evolution. [Carnegie](#), the defender of wealth and modern capitalism, praises the results of the modern industrial model of manufacture. He reminds us that in former times most manufacture was conducted at home and in small shops in an environment that was stable and suffered little change or upheaval.

But the inevitable result of such a mode of manufacture was crude articles at high prices. To-day the world obtains commodities of excellent quality at prices which even the generation preceding this would have deemed incredible. In the commercial world similar causes would have produced similar results, and the race is benefited thereby. The poor enjoy what the rich could not before afford. What were the luxuries have become the necessities of life. The laborer has now more comforts than the farmer had a few generations ago. The farmer has more luxuries than the landlord had, and is more richly clad and better housed. The landlord has books and pictures rarer, and appointments more artistic, than the King could then obtain. ([para. 4](#))

Carnegie's examples of laborer, farmer, and landlord stand for the lower, middle, and upper classes in a modern society. He then shows that the modern industrial mode of manufacture has benefited not just one class, but everyone, from the poor to the rich.

Everywhere in this collection authors rely on cause and effect to develop their thoughts. [Jefferson](#) establishes the relationship between abuses by the British and America's need to sever its colonial ties. [Marx](#) establishes the capitalist economic system as the cause of the oppression of the workers who produce the

wealth enjoyed by the rich. [Rachel Carson](#) establishes the causes of chemical insecticides that have polluted the environment and sketches their effects on birds and animals that depend on insects. She also points to the effects on people and agriculture.

Although Plato presents us with an allegory of captives in a cave staring at shadows on a wall, it is clear that he intends for us to understand that the condition he describes causes the captives to see a false world, not a real world. This allegory has long been inspiring to philosophers who are concerned with the nature of reality. The job of scientists, for example, is to understand reality and to be sure that they are not beguiled by illusory information. The following writer sees one point of Plato's message.

At first, I did not understand what Plato was trying to say. I was unaware of what an allegory is and how it works, but after a while I began to make sense of the situation he presents to his readers. In his cave, Plato's people see shadows, not reality, and therefore their thinking is limited. My first thought was that Plato's cave is a lot like our movie theater, or even like our living room when the TV is on. Either on the movie screen or the TV screen what we see are shadows. They are realistic, but they are not real. If we take them to be real, we will make some serious mistakes because the people who created these "shadows" want to convince us of their own "truth," whether it is political, economic, psychological, or anything else. These "shadows" want us to believe in their "reality," rather than to encourage us to think critically for ourselves. It took a long time for

Plato's captives to make themselves free, and for many of us we accept what our films and our TVs tell us because they are in front of us all the time. To get free, we need to begin a program of critical analysis that points us to the truth. How do we do this? Let me make some suggestions.

—Hal M.

This writer interprets Plato in a way that makes sense to many other people. Hal is interested primarily in the political power of the “shadows” he responds to. He sees how political films, political TV shows, and political advertisements ask him to look at the “shadows” and not veer to any position that offers an alternative. Hal sees that Plato invites him to observe the truth rather than artificial simulations.

DEVELOPMENT BY ANALYSIS OF CIRCUMSTANCES

Everything we discuss exists as certain circumstances.

Traditionally, the discussion of circumstances has had two parts. The first examines what is possible or impossible in a given situation. Whenever you try to convince your audience to take a specific course of action, it is helpful to show that given the circumstances, no other action is possible. If you disagree with a course of action that people may intend to follow because none other seems possible, however, you may have to demonstrate that another is indeed possible.

The second part of this method of development analyzes what has been done in the past: if something was done in the past, then it may be possible to do it again in the future. A historical survey of a situation often examines circumstances.

When using the method of analysis of circumstances to develop an idea, keep in mind the following tips:

- Clarify the question of possibility and impossibility.
- Review past circumstances so that future ones can be determined.
- Suggest a course of action based on an analysis of possibility and past circumstances.
- Establish the present circumstances, listing them if necessary. Be detailed, and concentrate on facts.

Martin Luther King Jr. examines the circumstances that led to his imprisonment and the writing of "[Letter from Birmingham Jail](#)". He explains that "racial injustice engulfs this community," and he reviews the "hard brutal facts of the case." His course of action is clearly stated and reviewed. He explains why some demonstrations were postponed and why his organization and others have been moderate in demands and actions. But he also examines the possibility of using nonviolent action to help change the inequitable social circumstances that existed in Birmingham. His examination of past action goes back to the Bible and the actions of the Apostle Paul. His examination of contemporary action is based on the facts of the situation, which he carefully enumerates. He concludes his letter by inviting the religious

leaders to whom he addresses himself to join him in a righteous movement for social change.

Machiavelli is also interested in the question of possibility, because he is trying to encourage his ideal prince to follow a prescribed pattern of behavior. As he constantly reminds us, if the prince does not do so, it is possible that he will be deposed or killed. Taken as a whole, "[The Qualities of the Prince](#)" is a recitation of the circumstances that are necessary for success in politics. Machiavelli establishes this in a single paragraph:

Therefore, it is not necessary for a prince to have all of the above--mentioned qualities, but it is very necessary for him to appear to have them. Furthermore, I shall be so bold as to assert this: that having them and practicing them at all times is harmful; and appearing to have them is useful; for instance, to seem merciful, faithful, humane, forthright, religious, and to be so; but his mind should be disposed in such a way that should it become necessary not to be so, he will be able and know how to change to the contrary. And it is essential to understand this: that a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things by which men are considered good, for in order to maintain the state he is often obliged to act against his promise, against charity, against humanity, and against religion. And therefore, it is necessary that he have a mind ready to turn itself according to the way the winds of Fortune and the changeability of affairs require him; and, as I said above, as long as it is possible, he should not stray from the good, but he should know how to enter into evil when necessity commands. ([para. 23](#))

This is the essential Machiavelli, the Machiavelli who is often thought of as a cynic. He advises his prince to be virtuous but says that it is not always possible to be so. Therefore, the prince must learn how not to be good when "necessity commands." The

circumstances, he tells us, always determine whether it is possible to be virtuous. A charitable reading of this passage must conclude that his advice is at best amoral.

Many of the essays in this collection rely on an analysis of circumstances. [Frederick Douglass](#) examines the circumstances of slavery and freedom. When Marx reviews the changes in economic history in [The Communist Manifesto](#), he examines the circumstances under which labor functions:

The feudal system of industry, under which industrial production was monopolized by closed guilds, now no longer sufficed for the growing wants of the new market. The manufacturing system took its place. The guild-masters were pushed on one side by the manufacturing middle-class: division of labor between the different corporate guilds vanished in the face of division of labor in each single workshop. ([para. 14](#))

[Reich](#) examines the circumstances of our contemporary economy. He determines, among other things, that the wages of in-person servers — bank tellers, retail salespeople, restaurant employees, and others — will continue to be low despite the great demand for such workers. Not only are these workers easily replaced, but automation has led to the elimination of jobs — including bank teller jobs made redundant by automatic tellers and by banking with personal computers, and routine factory jobs replaced by automation. Under current circumstances, these workers will lose out to the symbolic analysts who know how to make their specialized knowledge work for them and who cannot be easily replaced.

Woolf's statement, "For genius like Shakespeare's is not born among laboring, uneducated, servile people" ([para. 8](#)) stimulated the following writer to respond by considering whether what she said is true today.

Virginia Woolf may be right in saying that in Shakespeare's time genius may not have appeared in the lower classes in England. At that time the lower classes were denied basic education, but the circumstances today have changed dramatically. We do not have the same sense of class that the English have. Ordinary people today have access to many kinds of education, and it is education that helps produce genius. Even great playwrights like Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams would probably not have been able to write in Shakespeare's time because they did not come from the upper class. But in our time they became the best writers of their generation. Both of them not only went to grade school and high school, but they also went to college. Women writers today are also successful because they have been able to get an education that is much the same as men. I just saw Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice*, which I think is an example of modern genius and shows how times have changed.

–Martha G.

DEVELOPMENT BY ANALYSIS OF QUOTATIONS

Not all the essays in this collection rely on quotations from other writers, but many do. “[Letter from Birmingham Jail](#)”, for example, relies on quotations from the Bible. In that piece, King implies his analysis of the quotations because the religious leaders to whom he writes know the quotations well. By invoking the quotations, King gently chides the clergy, who ought to be aware of their relevance. In a variant on using quotations, [Reich](#) relies on information taken from various government reports. He includes the information in his text and supplies numerous footnotes indicating the sources, which are usually authoritative and convincing.

When you use quotations, remember these pointers:

- Quote accurately, and avoid distorting the original context.
- Unless the quotation is absolutely self-evident, offer your own clarifying comments.
- To help your audience understand why you have chosen a specific quotation, establish its function in your essay.

[Carson](#) uses few quotations in her “The Obligation to Endure” until the last few pages. The body of her essay establishes the circumstances in which agricultural industries have used insecticides extensively to boost the production of land used for farming. She also points to the fact that one result has been to force the government to subsidize farmers who have taken surplus land out of farming altogether. Her message is that there is no food shortage and no reason to be as aggressive in the use of pesticide as has been done. She uses references to

government publications, and eventually she quotes from Charles Elton's book, *The Ecology of Invasions*, to support her view that variety of planting and insect life help control damage by alien species introduced by accident. She quotes Elton, who says that more basic knowledge of animal and plant populations "will promote an even balance" ([para. 20](#)) that will make drastic measures less necessary to control insects and invasive plants. She also quotes Paul Shepard, who feels we may be living close to the "limits of toleration of the corruption of its own environment" ([para. 22](#)). At the end of her essay, Carson stresses the need to have all the facts in order to know how to proceed to protect the environment, and she quotes Jean Rostand: "The obligation to endure gives us the right to know" ([para. 26](#)). James Gleick begins his essay, "[What Is Time?](#)," with a torrent of quotations. He starts off with a quotation from the novelist Vladimir Nabokov, whom he quotes again later. In his opening the quotations are used as an effective way of exploring the many efforts that have been made to define time. The first paragraph refers to definitions by a historian, a novelist, a physicist, a musician, a comedian, and a philosopher, almost overwhelming the reader with quotation:

"Time is 'the landscape of experience,' says Daniel Boorstin. 'Time is but memory in the making,' says Nabokov. 'Time is what happens when nothing else does'—Dick Feynman. 'Time is nature's way to keep everything from happening all at once,' says Johnny Wheeler or Woody Allen. Martin Heidegger says, 'There is no time.'"

All of these definitions fall short of giving us a clear definition of time, which is of course the point Gleick is trying to make. He resorts eventually to the dictionary, as a demonstration of the

difficulty that he himself faces in his effort to answer the question he has used to title his essay. Gleick's strategy, we ultimately learn, is not to provide us with an airtight definition, but to demonstrate how difficult it is to define something that we all understand in a practical way. His initial use of quotations makes us aware of the complexity of physics and of time as an aspect of the universe that we all take for granted.

In your own writing you will find plenty of opportunity to cite passages from an author whose ideas have engaged your attention. In writing an essay in response to Machiavelli, Jung, or any other author in the book, you may find yourself quoting and commenting in some detail on specific lines or passages. This is especially true if you find yourself disagreeing with a point. Your first job, then, is to establish what you disagree with — and usually it helps to quote, which is essentially a way of producing evidence.

Finally, it must be noted that only a few aspects of the rhetorical methods used by the authors in this book have been discussed here. Rhetoric is a complex art that warrants fuller study. But the points raised here are important because they are illustrated in many of the texts you will read, and by watching them at work you can begin to learn to use them yourself. By using them you will be able to achieve in your writing the fullness and purposiveness that mark mature prose.

Establishing an Argument

In rhetoric, an argument is not a dispute. You are not expected to antagonize or admonish your reader or to assume that you are countering a position that some readers might have. Instead, an argument, in the sense that we are using the term here, is a reasoned position that is stated clearly and developed fully enough to be convincing. When you publically discuss politics, music, art, or anything else that requires a judgment of some sort, you will get feedback from whomever you happen to be talking to. That person may not be content with your ideas and may contend with you. When you are writing, there is no one to respond so directly to your views. Therefore, you have no reason to be defensive in what you write. Instead, you need only concentrate on examining the issues that most interest you and then take a stand that seems both reasonable and convincing. Your thesis sentence — or sentences, since some theses will require more than one — will establish what your position is and herald the approach you will take in making it clear and convincing.

Most of the selections in this book are constructed as arguments, although they take a variety of forms. Some assume a hostile audience, some a friendly audience. Some assume their subject is controversial, some assume they are primarily uncovering the truth, and some are simply being informative by explaining something complex. Machiavelli's selection from *The Prince* argues for a strongman political leader. In her essay about insecticides, Carson argues in favor of greater restraint in the use of poisons that may have far-reaching effects. King's "Letter from

Birmingham Jail” is itself one of the premier arguments in favor of nonviolent action. Its presentation of reasoned argument is outstanding. Carnegie argues that the wealthy must give their money back to the community in their lifetimes so they can see that it is well spent.

Marx’s *The Communist Manifesto* is still relevant long after the demise of communism. His arguments against globalization are probably the most telling for today’s audience. Reich addresses globalization and argues that the people who will prosper in our economy are the symbolic analysts who can interpret and master texts. One of the most impressive arguments in the book is Woolf’s insistence that if Shakespeare’s imaginary “gifted sister” had the same advantages of education and independence that Shakespeare enjoyed, she might have become as accomplished and as well known. Woolf knew that the mores of the age in which Shakespeare lived denied both education and independence to women and assigned them supporting roles in the family. What Woolf argued for was equality, something still wanting in her own society. In reality, Woolf is arguing not so much for Shakespeare’s sister as for herself and other women in her own age.

Wollstonecraft in her essay on the subjection of women in the eighteenth century is arguing much the same case as Woolf is.

Ravitch argues for a complete and full education in the public schools. She sees a disparity between poor and rich communities and the curriculum they each enjoy. Her argument demands a complete curriculum in all communities. Michael Gazzaniga ignores the question of religion entirely when he discusses the

nature of morality in his ["Toward a Universal Ethics"](#). He addresses the question of how our genes function to produce a sense of altruism in the human race. Gazzaniga sees the role of evolution as developing the kind of ethical behavior that guaranteed the survival of the race throughout hundreds of thousands of years. Studies of the function of the brain during moral reasoning, while not entirely providing an answer, help him in examining the virtue theory of ethical behavior. It is nature rather than religion that spurs Gazzaniga's research. Darwin argues with masses of collected evidence to derive an argument in favor of natural selection and, thus, evolution.

While your argument can take a number of different apparent forms, the deep structure of any argument will probably follow one of three patterns:

- **Classical argument** is a pattern in which you try to convince your readers by the use of facts, evidence, and your logical analysis of the important elements of your position.
- **Toulmin argument**, in which you try to convince your readers to take a specific stand on a question of importance, relies on a basic assumption that most people take for granted.
- **Rogerian argument** requires that you establish as much common ground as possible with your audience so that you have a better chance of persuading them. Because this tactic is nonthreatening, your reader will not be immediately defensive and will therefore be more open to your argument.

These patterns of argument and how they are used by the authors in this volume are discussed in more detail below.

CLASSICAL ARGUMENT

This form of argument relies on facts and evidence as well as on logic and reasoning to convince the reader of a specific position. Carnegie's argument in favor of unequal distribution of wealth is a case in point. He begins by remarking that the Sioux make no distinction between the habitation or the dress of the rich or the poor. He argues that "civilized man" was once in that condition but that with industry and civilization come wealth and inequality. Carnegie can tolerate these inequities, but he ultimately points to the fact that wealthy people are able to be philanthropists and improve the lot of everyone. And his argument extends to trying to convince the wealthy that they are merely stewards of wealth, not its owners. Their responsibility is to use it wisely for the benefit of society. In fact, Carnegie did exactly that, giving all his money to public service.

Freud establishes a complex argument in favor of his theory of the Oedipus complex. He begins with evidence from classical Greek tragedy, the story of Oedipus the king, who unknowingly killed his father and married his mother. He points to the great Elizabethan drama *Hamlet*, which implies that Hamlet has an unusual attraction to his mother. Freud uses these examples as well as his own practice of psychology to bolster his argument. The force of Freud's argument was such that his views became known and to a great extent accepted globally.

TOULMIN ARGUMENT

The second common form, like classical argument, is designed to convince someone of a specific position on a subject. This form, known as the Toulmin argument, has three parts:

- Claim: what you are trying to prove (often contained in the thesis statement),
- Grounds: the data — facts, observations, or conditions — you use to prove your claim, and
- Warrant: an assumption or belief that underlies the claim and is taken for granted.

Jefferson's claim in the Declaration of Independence is that America deserves to be just that: independent from Britain. The extraordinary volume of grounds, or data, he presents demonstrates that King George III has become a tyrant and "is unfit to be the ruler of a free people." His warrant is the underlying belief that "all men are created equal" and must be free, not victims of tyranny. Jefferson has a great deal at stake here. He proposes rebellion and independence from a much more powerful nation and therefore must be convincing, especially to the Americans themselves, most of whom emigrated from Great Britain and felt they owed it allegiance. If other Americans were not convinced by his argument, his life was forfeit.

ROGERIAN ARGUMENT

The third form, the **Rogerian argument**, differs in that it tries to find common ground within a subject that most people would agree with. Thus, this kind of argument may not seem to be an argument at all. It usually functions by establishing basic positions

that most people would find nonthreatening, and thus, such arguments appear to be simple discussions. However, the ultimate goal of a Rogerian argument is still for potentially differing sides to come to mutual agreement. That is the case with Judith Butler's essay from *Undoing Gender*. The underlying question in her discussion of the surgical mishaps perpetrated on her case study, David, who had been so badly maimed surgically when young that he was raised as a girl, is whether gender is socialization or an "essentialism." The argument is not designed to press us toward accepting that gender is established by the society in which we live or that, regardless of society, gender is somehow innate and decreed by biology. The complexity of David's childhood, including the intervention of those who continued to study his development and who directed much of his growth and tried to craft his sense of self, makes the example very difficult to pin down. That is Butler's point. Because she is not contentious, we are able to consider the example of David from many angles. What we come away with is a sense of how very difficult the entire issue of gender assignment is.

Whatever the form, the structure of most arguments will follow this pattern:

Beginning of an argument

- Identify the subject and its importance.
- Suggest (or imply) how you plan to argue your case.

Middle of an argument

- Explain the main points of your argument with accompanying evidence.
- Argue each point in turn with the analysis of evidence.
- Rebut arguments against your position.

Conclusion of an argument

- Review the claims basic to your argument.
- Summarize your arguments, what they imply, and what you then conclude.

The following sample essay, “The Qualities of the President,” modeled on Machiavelli’s [“The Qualities of the Prince”](#), is an example of a Rogerian argument. The author reviews examples of the behavior of various kinds of modern leaders and then develops common ground with the reader to foster agreement on the qualities that seem most desirable in a modern president. The writer is not confrontational and does not demand absolute agreement but instead offers an exploration of the subject while nonetheless driving to a reasonable conclusion.

A Sample Essay

The following sample essay is based on the first several paragraphs of Machiavelli's "The Qualities of the Prince" that were annotated in "[Evaluating Ideas: An Introduction to Critical Reading](#)". The essay is based on the annotations and the questions that were developed from them:

- Should a leader be armed?
- Is it true that an unarmed leader is despised?
- Will those leaders who are always good come to ruin among those who are not good?
- To remain in power, must a leader learn how not to be good?

Not all these questions are addressed in the essay, but they serve as a starting point and a focus for writing. The methods of development that are discussed above form the primary rhetorical techniques of the essay, and each method that is used is labeled in the margin. The sample essay does two things simultaneously: it attempts to clarify the meaning of Machiavelli's advice, and then it attempts to apply that advice to a contemporary circumstance. Naturally, the essay could have chosen to discuss only the Renaissance situation that Machiavelli describes, but to do so would have required specialized knowledge of that period. In this sample essay, the questions prompted by the annotations serve as the basis of the discussion.

THE QUALITIES OF THE PRESIDENT

Introduction

Machiavelli's essay "The Qualities of the Prince" has a number of very worrisome points. The ones that worry me most have to do with the question of whether it is reasonable to expect a leader to behave virtuously. I think this is connected to the question of whether the leader should be armed. Machiavelli emphasizes that the prince must be armed or else face the possibility that someone will take over the government. When I think about how that advice applies to modern times, particularly in terms of how our president should behave, I find Machiavelli's position very different from my own.

Circumstance

First, I want to discuss the question of being armed. That is where Machiavelli starts, and it is an important concern. In Machiavelli's time, the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, it was common for men to walk in the streets of Florence wearing a rapier for protection. The possibility of robbery or even attack by rival political groups was great in those days. Even if he had a bodyguard, it was still important for a prince to know how to fight and to be able to defend himself. Machiavelli seems to be talking only about self-defense when he recommends that the prince be armed. In our time, sadly, it too is important to think about protecting the president and other leaders.

Examples

In recent years there have been many assassination attempts on world leaders, and our president, John F. Kennedy, was killed in Dallas in 1963. His brother Robert was killed when he was campaigning for the presidency in 1968. Also in 1968 Martin Luther King Jr. was killed in Memphis because of his belief in racial equality. In the 1980s Pope John Paul II was shot by a would-be assassin, as was President Ronald Reagan. They both lived, but Indira Gandhi, the leader of India, was shot and killed in 1984. This is a frightening record. Probably even Machiavelli would have been appalled. But would his solution — being armed — have helped? I do not think so.

Cause/Effect

For one thing, I cannot believe that if the pope had a gun he would have shot his would-be assassin, Ali Acga. The thought of it is almost silly. Martin Luther King Jr., who constantly preached the value of nonviolence, logically could not have shot at an assailant. How could John F. Kennedy have returned fire at a sniper? Robert Kennedy had bodyguards, and both President Reagan and Indira Gandhi were protected by armed guards. The presence of arms obviously does not produce the desired effect: security. The only

Description

The title of the text reads, The Qualities of the President.

New paragraph. Machiavelli's essay open quotes The Qualities of the Prince close quotes has a number of very worrisome points. The ones that worry me most have to do with the question of whether it is reasonable to expect a leader to behave virtuously. I think this is connected to the question of whether the leader should be armed. Machiavelli emphasizes that the prince must be armed or else face the possibility that someone will take over the government. When I think about how that advice applies to modern times, particularly in terms of how our president should behave, I find Machiavelli's position very different from my own. (A margin note reads, Introduction.)

New paragraph. First, I want to discuss the question of being armed. That is where Machiavelli starts, and it is an important concern. In Machiavelli's time, the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, it was common for men to walk in the streets of Florence wearing a rapier for protection. The possibility of robbery or even attack by rival political groups was great in those days. Even if he had a bodyguard, it was still important for a prince to know how to fight and to be able to defend himself. Machiavelli seems to be talking only about self-defense when he recommends that the prince be armed. In our time, sadly, it too is important to think about protecting the president and other leaders. (A margin note reads, Circumstance.)

New paragraph. In recent years there have been many assassination attempts on world leaders, and our president, John F. Kennedy, was killed in Dallas in 1963. His brother Robert was killed when he was campaigning for the presidency in 1968. Also in 1968 Martin Luther King Junior was killed in Memphis because of his belief in racial equality. In the 1980s Pope John Paul II was shot by a would-be assassin, as was President Ronald Reagan. They both lived, but Indira Gandhi, the leader of India, was shot and killed in 1984. This is a frightening record. Probably even Machiavelli would have been

appalled. But would his solution in dash being armed in dash have helped? I do not think so. (A margin note reads, Examples.)

New paragraph. For one thing, I cannot believe that if the pope had a gun he would have shot his would-be assassin, Ali Acga. The thought of it is almost silly. Martin Luther King Junior, who constantly preached the value of nonviolence, logically could not have shot at an assailant. How could John F. Kennedy have returned fire at a sniper? Robert Kennedy had bodyguards, and both President Reagan and Indira Gandhi were protected by armed guards. The presence of arms obviously does not produce the desired effect: security. The only (A margin note reads, Cause/effect.)

thing that can produce that is to reduce the visibility of a leader. The president could speak on television or, when he must appear in public, use a bulletproof screen. The opportunities for would-be assassins can be reduced. But the thought of an American president carrying arms is unacceptable.

Comparison

The question of whether a president should be armed is to some extent symbolic. Our president stands for America, and if he were to appear in press conferences or state meetings wearing a gun, he would give a symbolic message to the world: look out, we're dangerous. Cuba's Fidel Castro often appeared in a military uniform with a gun during his presidency, and when he spoke at the United Nations in 1960, he was the first, and I think the only, world leader to wear a pistol there. I have seen pictures of Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler appearing in public in military uniform, but never in business suits. The same was true of the Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi and Iraq's Saddam Hussein. Today when a president or a head of state is armed there is often reason to worry. The current leaders of Russia usually wear suits, but Joseph Stalin always wore a military uniform. His rule in the Soviet Union was marked by the extermination of whole groups of people and the imprisonment of many more. We do not want an armed president.

Use of quotations

Yet Machiavelli plainly says, "among the other bad effects it causes, being disarmed makes you despised . . . for between an armed and an unarmed man there is no comparison whatsoever" (para. 2). The

Comparison

problem with this statement is that it is more relevant to the sixteenth century than to the twenty-first. In our time the threat of assassination is so great that being armed would be no sure protection, as we have seen in the case of the assassination of President Sadat of Egypt, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. On the other hand, the pope, like Martin Luther King Jr., would never have appeared with a weapon, and yet it can hardly be said they were despised. If anything, the world's respect for them is enormous. America's president also commands the world's respect, as does the prime minister of Great Britain. Yet neither would ever think of being armed. If what Machiavelli said was true in the early 1500s, it is pretty clear that it is not true today.

Definition

All this basically translates into a question of whether a leader should be virtuous. I suppose the definition of *virtuous* would differ with different people, but I think of it as holding a moral philosophy that you try to live by. No one is ever completely virtuous, but

Description

The text reads, thing that can produce that is to reduce the visibility of a leader. The president could speak on television or, when he must appear in public, use a bulletproof screen. The opportunities for would-be assassins can be reduced. But the thought of an American president carrying arms is unacceptable.

New paragraph. The question of whether a president should be armed is to some extent symbolic. Our president stands for America, and if he were to appear in press conferences or state meetings wearing a gun, he would give a symbolic message to the world: look out, we're dangerous. Cuba's Fidel Castro often appeared in a military uniform with a gun during his presidency, and when he spoke at the United Nations in 1960, he was the first, and I think the only, world leader to wear a pistol there. I have seen pictures of Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler appearing in public in military uniform, but never in business suits. The same was true of the Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi and Iraq's Saddam Hussein. Today when a president or a head of state is armed there is often reason to worry. The current leaders of Russia usually wear suits, but Joseph Stalin always wore a military uniform. His rule in the Soviet Union was marked by the extermination of whole groups of people and the imprisonment of many more. We do not want an armed president. (A margin note reads, Comparison.)

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I think a president ought to try to be so. That means the president ought to tell the truth, since that is one of the basic virtues. The cardinal virtues—which were the same in Machiavelli's time as in ours—are justice, prudence, fortitude, and temperance. In a president, the virtue of justice is absolutely a must or else what America stands for is lost. We definitely want our president to be prudent, to use good judgment, particularly in this nuclear age, when acts of imprudence could get us blown up. Fortitude, the ability to stand up for what is right, is a must for our president. Temperance is also important; we do not want an alcoholic for a president, nor do we want anyone with excessive bad habits.

Conclusion

It seems to me that a president who was armed or who emphasized arms in the way Machiavelli appears to mean would be threatening injustice (the way Stalin did) and implying intemperance, like many armed world leaders. When I consider this issue, I cannot think of any vice that our president ought to possess at any time. Injustice, imprudence, cowardice, and intemperance are, for me, unacceptable. Maybe Machiavelli was thinking of deception and lying as necessary evils, but they are a form of injustice, and no competent president—no president who was truly virtuous—would need them. Prudence and fortitude are the two virtues most essential for diplomacy. The president who has those virtues will govern well and uphold our basic values.

Description

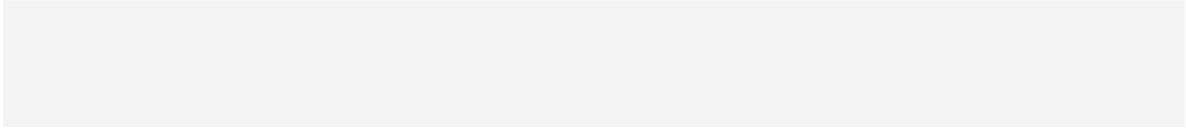
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The range of this essay is controlled and expresses a viewpoint that is focused and coherent. This essay of about one thousand words illustrates each method of development discussed in the text and uses each one to further the argument. The writer disagrees with one of Machiavelli's positions and presents an argument based on personal opinion that is bolstered by example and by analysis of current political conditions as they compare

with those of Machiavelli's time. A longer essay could have gone more deeply into issues raised in any single paragraph and could have studied more closely the views of a specific president, such as President Ronald Reagan, who opposed stricter gun control laws even after he was shot.

The selections that follow in this book are often intense and challenging. They offer some profound ideas, drawn from the ancients as well as from the moderns. Many of the most important ideas of our culture are durable in that they have been considered and argued over for generations. When you read these works, you will begin taking part in the great intellectual debates of our culture. When you respond to these works by writing an essay, your voice will be added to the dialogue.



Part One GOVERNMENT

LAO-TZU

NICCOLÒ MACHIABELLI

THOMAS JEFFERSON

FRANCIS FUKUYAMA

JOSÉ ORTEGA Y GASSET

CORNEL WEST

BENAZIR BHUTTO

Introduction

He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it.

—CONFUCIUS (551–479 B.C.E.)

When a government becomes powerful it is destructive, extravagant, and violent; it is an usurer which takes bread from innocent mouths and deprives honorable men of their substance, for votes with which to perpetuate itself.

—MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO (106–43 B.C.E.)

All the ills of mankind, all the tragic misfortunes that fill the history books, all the political blunders, all the failures of the great leaders have arisen merely from a lack of skill at dancing.

—MOLIERE (1622–1673)

Society in every state is a blessing, but Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state, an intolerable one.

—THOMAS PAINE (1737–1809)

No government can be long secure without formidable opposition.

—BENJAMIN DISRAELI (1804–1881)

A government is the most dangerous threat to man's rights: it holds a legal monopoly on the use of physical force against legally disarmed victims.

—AYN RAND (1902–1982)

Flags are bits of colored cloth that governments use first to shrink-wrap people's minds & then as ceremonial shrouds to bury the dead.

—ARUNDHATI ROY (1961–)

At the core of any idea of government is the belief that individuals need an organized allocation of authority to protect their well-being. However, throughout history, the form of that allocation of authority has undergone profound shifts, and each successive type of government has inspired debates and defenses. The first civilizations in Mesopotamia and Egypt (4000–3000 B.C.E.) were theocracies ruled by a high priest. Gradually these political systems evolved into monarchies in which a king, whose role was separate from that of the religious leaders, held power. During the sixth century B.C.E., the Greek city-state of Athens developed the first democratic system wherein male citizens (but not women or slaves) could elect a body of leaders. As these forms of government developed, so too did the concept of government as the center of law and administration. However, governments and ideas of governments (actual or ideal) have not followed a straight path. History has witnessed constant oscillations between various forms and functions of government, from tyrannies to republics. In turn, these governments and their relation to the individual citizen have been the focus of many great thinkers.

The thinkers represented in this section concentrate on both the role and form of government. Lao-tzu reflects on the ruler who would, by careful management, maintain a happy citizenry. Machiavelli places the survival of the prince above all other considerations of government and, unlike Lao-tzu, ignores the concerns and rights of the individual. For Machiavelli, power is the issue, and maintaining it is the sign of good government.

Thomas Jefferson struggled with the monarchical form of government, as did others before him, and envisioned a republic that would serve the people. Kings were a threatened species in eighteenth-century Europe, and with Jefferson's aid, they became extinct in the United States. Like Jefferson, José Ortega y Gasset resisted doctrines of absolute rule. He lived through the early part of the twentieth century, when authoritarian regimes were becoming more common, and in that environment grew wary of the power of the state. By contrast, Francis Fukuyama saw the rise of postwar democracies in South America, eastern Europe, and Asia. He explores what caused this increase in democratic states and investigates whether these democracies will survive. Cornel West, considering the nature of democracy in the United States, connects his present moment with the arguments of the founders of the United States and thinkers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., all of whom were rooted in the Judeo-Christian religion of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century West, which they interpreted as preaching a doctrine of equality. Finally, Benazir Bhutto also connects the morality of government to her religious context as she extolls the virtues of democracy and argues that it aligns with the teachings of the Koran, the holy book of Islam.

Lao-tzu (sixth century B.C.E.), whose writings provide the basis for Taoism, one of three major Chinese religions, was interested in political systems. His work, the *Tao-Te Ching*, has been translated loosely as "The Way of Power." One thing that becomes clear from reading his work — especially the selections presented here — is his concern for the well-being of the people in any

government. He does not recommend specific forms of government (monarchic, representative, democratic) or advocate election versus the hereditary transfer of power. But he does make it clear that the success of the existing forms of government (in his era, monarchic) depends on good relations between the leader and the people. He refers to the chief of state as *Master* or *Sage*, implying that one obligation of the governor is to be wise. One expression of that wisdom is the willingness to permit things to take their natural course. His view is that the less the Master needs to do — or perhaps the less government needs to intervene — the happier the people will be.

Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) was a pragmatic man of the Renaissance in Italy. As a theoretician and a member of the political court, he understood government from the inside and carefully examined its philosophy. Because his writings stress the importance of gaining and holding power at any cost, Machiavelli's name has become synonymous with political cunning. However, a careful reading of his work as a reflection of the instability of his time shows that his advice to wield power ruthlessly derived largely from his fear that a weak prince would lose the city-state of Florence to France or to another powerful, plundering nation. His commitment to a powerful prince is based on his view that in the long run strength will guarantee the peace and happiness of the citizens, for whom independence is otherwise irrelevant. Therefore, Machiavelli generally ignores questions concerning the comfort and rights of the individual.

Thomas Jefferson's (1743–1826) views were also radical for his time. In contrast to Machiavelli, and armed with the philosophy of Enlightenment writers, his Declaration of Independence advocates the eradication of the monarch entirely. Not everyone in the colonies agreed with this view. Indeed, his political opponents, such as Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr, were far from certain such a view was correct. In fact, some efforts were made to install George Washington as king (he refused). In the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson emphasizes the right of the individual to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” and the obligation of government to serve the people by protecting those rights.

Writing in the 1930s, the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955) warns of the threat of dictatorships developing in Italy, Spain, Germany, and Russia. He wrote at a time of worldwide economic collapse in which the people of Europe were emerging from the aftermath of war and revolution, a condition that he felt threatened only recently stabilized democracies. He argues that the population of a modern state cannot act on their own but need competent intellectual and moral leadership. Otherwise, the crowd acts in a predictable fashion: like a mob. He argues that, when faced with a mob mentality, the state forces society to serve itself, rather than have the state serve society.

The philosopher Cornel West (b. 1953) explores the faults in our modern democracy, especially the influence of American businesses and American military abroad. As an expert in Middle Eastern languages and culture, West argues that Islamic

fundamentalism is antagonistic toward the United States because of what it considers to be U.S. economic and military imperialism. While he is deeply concerned about the effect of political polarization in the United States today, he looks to the great writers and poets of America and their deep commitment to the individual's right to personal freedom and judgment. West is critical of social breakdown within growing cities as well as the "misguided righteousness" of extreme religious groups. Ultimately West takes comfort in a deep commitment to the principles of democracy as they were conceived at the founding of the United States and explicated in the writings of America's greatest thinkers. He sees modern artists, such as John Coltrane and Tupac Shakur, as continuing the tradition of clarifying the nature of American democracy.

Benazir Bhutto (1953–2007), twice prime minister of Pakistan, explains in "Islam and Democracy" why the teachings of the Koran, the holy book of Muslims, are receptive to democracy, diversity, equality, and fairness. She recognizes that most Westerners will not expect Islam to produce democratic governments because of what the West considers religious restrictions, but she insists that religion does not limit the possibility of democracy in Muslim nations. However, she also recognizes that, while Pakistan has a constitution that insists on democracy, there are few Muslim democracies. She has a number of theories why this is so, and she outlines them in her essay. Her greatest fears center on the extremists among Muslims, such as those who attacked her when she first returned to Pakistan and who, shortly after, killed her in a suicide bombing. In the aftermath

of the Arab Spring and subsequent political upheaval, the struggle for democratic government continues for many Muslim nations.

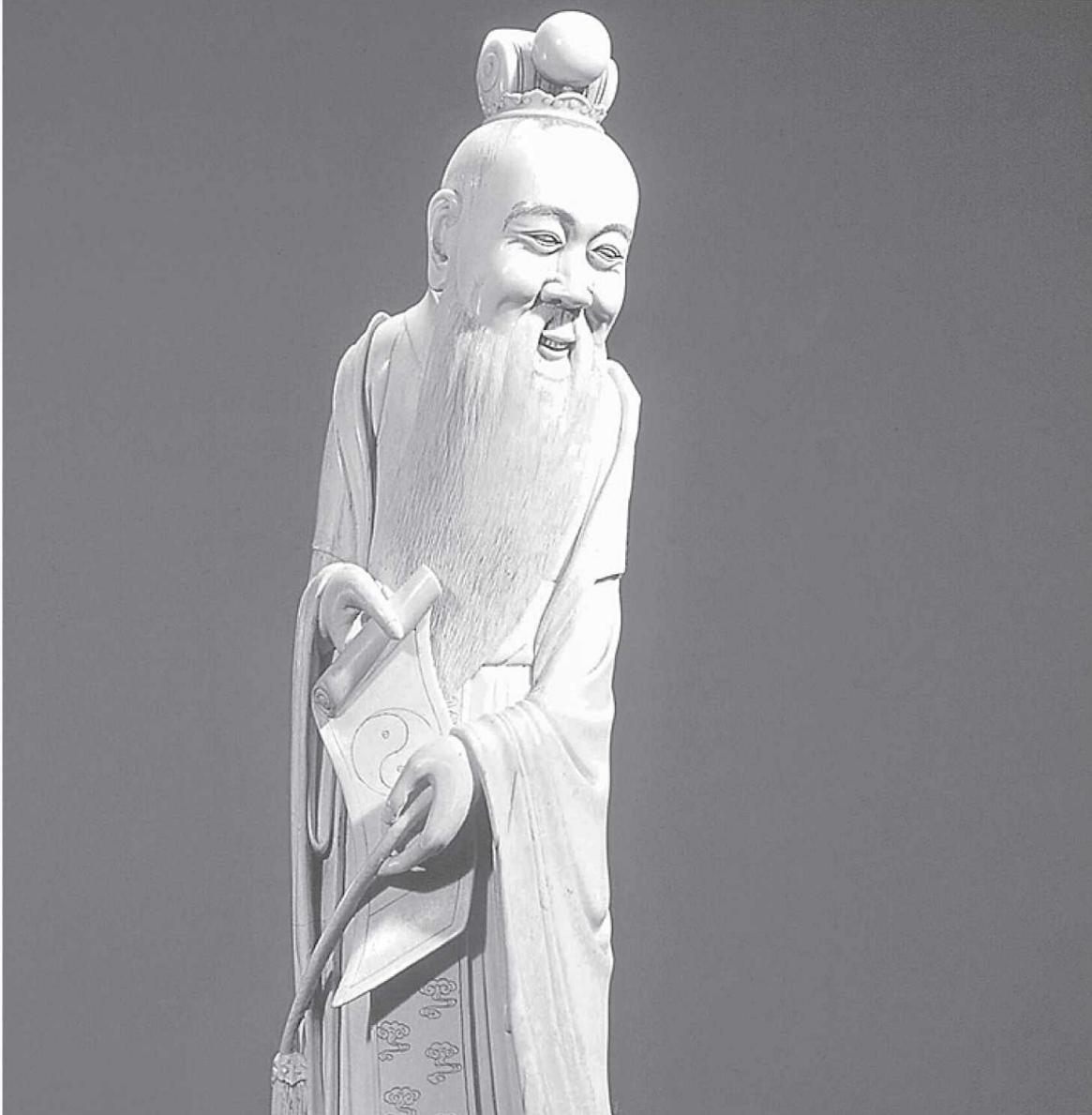
Some Considerations about the Nature of Government

Before reading the selections that follow in this section, consider your views of government. Reflect on the following questions and write out your responses. Discuss your answers with your classmates.

1. What is your perception of the responsibility of the individual to the state?
2. How well do you think your form of government serves the individual?
3. What is the role of government in protecting the rights of individuals?
4. What is the responsibility of government to protect the rights of minorities?
5. Under what conditions does the government have the right to use force?
6. What is the source of power in a democracy?
7. What freedoms can a democratic government legitimately restrict from its citizens?
8. Which rights do you as an individual willingly surrender to the government?
9. How much influence is it possible for you to have in your government?
10. How do you define “good” government?



Lao-tzu *Thoughts from the Tao-Te Ching*



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THE AUTHOR of the *Tao-Te Ching* (pronounced “dow deh jing”) is unknown, although the earliest texts ascribe the work to Lao-tzu (lou’ dzu’; sixth century B.C.E.), whose name can be translated as “Old Master.” However, nothing can be said with certainty about Lao-tzu as a historical figure. One tradition holds that he was

named Li Erh and born in the state of Ch'u in China at a time that would have made him a slightly older contemporary of Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.). Lao-tzu was said to have worked in the court of the Chou dynasty for most of his life. When he decided to leave the court to pursue a life of contemplation, the keeper of the gate urged him to write down his thoughts before he went into a self-imposed exile. Legend has it that he wrote the *Tao-Te Ching* and then left the state of Ch'u, never to be seen again.

Lao-tzu's writings offered a basis for Taoism, a religion officially founded by Chang Tao-ling in about 150 C.E. However, the *Tao-Te Ching* is a philosophical document as much about good government as it is about moral behavior. The term *Tao* cannot be easily understood or easily translated. In one sense it means "the way," but it also means "the method," as in "the way to enlightenment" or "the way to live." Some of the chapters of the *Tao-Te Ching* imply that the Tao is the allness of the universe, the ultimate reality of existence, and perhaps even a synonym for God. The text is marked by numerous complex ambiguities and paradoxes. It constantly urges us to look beyond ourselves, beyond our circumstances, and become one with the Tao — even though it cannot tell us what the Tao is.

The *Tao-Te Ching* has often been called a feminine treatise because it emphasizes the creative forces of the universe and frequently employs the imagery and metaphor of the womb — for example, "The Tao is called the Great Mother." The translator, Stephen Mitchell, translates some of the pronouns associated with the Master as "she," with the explanation that Chinese has no

equivalent for the male- and female-gendered pronouns and that “of all the great world religions the teaching of Lao-tzu is by far the most female.”

The teachings of Lao-tzu are the opposite of the materialist quest for power, dominance, authority, and wealth. Lao-tzu takes the view that possessions and wealth are lead weights of the soul, that they are meaningless and trivial, and that the truly free and enlightened person will regard them as evil. Because of his antimaterialist view, his recommendations may seem ironic or unclear, especially when he urges politicians to adopt a practice of judicious inaction. Lao-tzu’s advice to politicians is not to do nothing but to intercede only when it is a necessity and then only inconspicuously. Above all, Lao-tzu counsels avoiding useless activity: “the Master / acts without doing anything / and teaches without saying anything.” Such a statement is difficult for modern Westerners to comprehend, although it points to the concept of enlightenment, a state of spiritual peace and fulfillment that is central to the *Tao-Te Ching*.

Lao-tzu’s political philosophy minimizes the power of the state — especially the power of the state to oppress the people. Lao-tzu takes the question of the freedom of the individual into account by asserting that the wise leader will provide the people with what they need but not annoy them with promises of what they do not need. Lao-tzu argues that by keeping people unaware that they are being governed, the leader allows the people to achieve good things for themselves. As he writes, “If you want to be a great leader, / you must learn to follow the Tao. / Stop trying to control. /

Let go of fixed plans and concepts, / and the world will govern itself” (Verse 57); or in contrast, “If a country is governed with repression, / the people are depressed and crafty” (Verse 58).

To our modern ears this advice may or may not sound sensible. For those who feel government can solve the problems of the people, it will seem strange and unwise. For those who believe that the less government the better, the advice will sound sane and powerful.

THE RHETORIC OF THE *TAO-TE CHING*

Traditionally, Lao-tzu is said to have written the *Tao-Te Ching* as a guide for the ruling sage to follow. In other words, it is a handbook for politicians. It emphasizes the virtues that the ruler must possess, and in this sense the *Tao-Te Ching* invites comparison with Machiavelli’s efforts to instruct his ruler.

The visual form of the text is poetry, although the text is not metrical or image laden. Instead of thoroughly developing his ideas, Lao-tzu uses a traditional Chinese form that resembles the aphorism, a compressed statement weighty with meaning. Virtually every statement requires thought and reflection. Thus, the act of reading becomes an act of cooperation with the text.

One way of reading the text is to explore the varieties of interpretation it will sustain. The act of analysis requires patience and willingness to examine a statement to see what lies beneath the surface. Take, for example, one of the opening statements:

The Master leads
by emptying people's minds
and filling their cores,
by weakening their ambition
and toughening their resolve.
He helps people lose everything
they know, everything they desire,
and creates confusion
in those who think that they know.

This passage supports a number of readings. One centers on the question of the people's desire. "Emptying people's minds" implies eliminating desires that lead the people to steal or compete for power. "Weakening their ambition" implies helping people direct their powers toward the attainable and useful. Such a text is at odds with Western views that support advertisements for expensive computers, DVD and Blu-ray players, luxury cars, and other items that generate ambition and desire in people.

In part because the text resembles poetry, it needs to be read with attention to innuendo, subtle interpretation, and possible hidden meanings. One of the rhetorical virtues of paradox is that it forces the reader to consider several sides of an issue. The resulting confusion yields a wider range of possibilities than would arise from a self-evident statement. Through these complicated messages, Lao-tzu felt he was contributing to the spiritual enlightenment of the ruling sage, although he had no immediate hope that his message would be put into action. A modern state might have a difficult time following Lao-tzu's philosophy, but

many individuals have tried to attain peace and contentment by leading lives according to its principles.

■ ■ ■ PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Lao-tzu's "Thoughts from the *Tao-Te Ching*." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What is the Master's attitude toward action?
2. The Tao is "the way" — how are we to understand its meaning? What does it mean to be in harmony with the Tao?
3. According to Lao-tzu, why is moderation important in government?

From *Tao-Te Ching*. Translated by Stephen Mitchell.

Thoughts from the *Tao-Te Ching*

3

If you overesteem great men,
people become powerless.

If you overvalue possessions,
people begin to steal.

The Master leads
by emptying people's minds
and filling their cores,
by weakening their ambition
and toughening their resolve.
He helps people lose everything
they know, everything they desire,
and creates confusion
in those who think that they know.

Practice not-doing,
and everything will fall into place.

17

When the Master governs, the people
are hardly aware that he exists.
Next best is a leader who is loved.

Next, one who is feared.
The worst is one who is despised.

If you don't trust the people,
you make them untrustworthy.

The Master doesn't talk, he acts.
When his work is done,
the people say, "Amazing:
we did it, all by ourselves!"

18

When the great Tao is forgotten,
goodness and piety appear.
When the body's intelligence declines,
cleverness and knowledge step forth.
When there is no peace in the family,
filial piety begins.
When the country falls into chaos,
patriotism is born.

19

Throw away holiness and wisdom,
and people will be a hundred times happier.
Throw away morality and justice,
and people will do the right thing.

Throw away industry and profit,
and there won't be any thieves.

If these three aren't enough,
just stay at the center of the circle
and let all things take their course.

26

The heavy is the root of the light.
The unmoved is the source of all movement.

Thus the Master travels all day
without leaving home.
However splendid the views,
she stays serenely in herself.

Why should the lord of the country
flit about like a fool?
If you let yourself be blown to and fro,
you lose touch with your root.
If you let restlessness move you,
you lose touch with who you are.

29

Do you want to improve the world?

I don't think it can be done.

The world is sacred.

It can't be improved.

If you tamper with it, you'll ruin it.

If you treat it like an object, you'll lose it.

There is a time for being ahead,

a time for being behind;

a time for being in motion,

a time for being at rest;

a time for being vigorous,

a time for being exhausted;

a time for being safe,

a time for being in danger.

The Master sees things as they are,

without trying to control them.

She lets them go their own way,

and resides at the center of the circle.

30

Whoever relies on the Tao in governing men

doesn't try to force issues

or defeat enemies by force of arms.

For every force there is a counterforce.

Violence, even well intentioned,

always rebounds upon oneself.

The Master does his job

and then stops.

He understands that the universe
is forever out of control,

and that trying to dominate events
goes against the current of the Tao.

Because he believes in himself,
he doesn't try to convince others.

Because he is content with himself,
he doesn't need others' approval.

Because he accepts himself,
the whole world accepts him.

31

Weapons are the tools of violence;
all decent men detest them.

Weapons are the tools of fear;
a decent man will avoid them
except in the direst necessity
and, if compelled, will use them
only with the utmost restraint.

Peace is his highest value.

If the peace has been shattered,
how can he be content?

His enemies are not demons,
but human beings like himself.
He doesn't wish them personal harm.
Nor does he rejoice in victory.
How could he rejoice in victory
and delight in the slaughter of men?

He enters a battle gravely,
with sorrow and with great compassion,
as if he were attending a funeral.

37

The Tao never does anything,
yet through it all things are done.

If powerful men and women
could center themselves in it,
the whole world would be transformed
by itself, in its natural rhythms.
People would be content
with their simple, everyday lives,
in harmony, and free of desire.

When there is no desire,
all things are at peace.

The Master doesn't try to be powerful;
thus he is truly powerful.

The ordinary man keeps reaching for power;
thus he never has enough.

The Master does nothing,
yet he leaves nothing undone.
The ordinary man is always doing things,
yet many more are left to be done.

The kind man does something,
yet something remains undone.
The just man does something,
and leaves many things to be done.
The moral man does something,
and when no one responds
he rolls up his sleeves and uses force.

When the Tao is lost, there is goodness.
When goodness is lost, there is morality.
When morality is lost, there is ritual.
Ritual is the husk of true faith,
the beginning of chaos.

Therefore the Master concerns himself
with the depths and not the surface,

with the fruit and not the flower.
He has no will of his own.
He dwells in reality,
and lets all illusions go.

46

When a country is in harmony with the Tao,
the factories make trucks and tractors.
When a country goes counter to the Tao,
warheads are stockpiled outside the cities.

There is no greater illusion than fear,
no greater wrong than preparing to defend yourself,
no greater misfortune than having an enemy.

Whoever can see through all fear
will always be safe.

53

The great Way is easy,
yet people prefer the side paths.
Be aware when things are out of balance.
Stay centered within the Tao.

When rich speculators prosper

while farmers lose their land;
when government officials spend money
on weapons instead of cures;
when the upper class is extravagant and irresponsible
while the poor have nowhere to turn —
all this is robbery and chaos.
It is not in keeping with the Tao.

57

If you want to be a great leader,
you must learn to follow the Tao.
Stop trying to control.
Let go of fixed plans and concepts,
and the world will govern itself.

The more prohibitions you have,
the less virtuous people will be.
The more weapons you have,
the less secure people will be.
The more subsidies you have,
the less self-reliant people will be.

Therefore the Master says:
I let go of the law,
and people become honest.
I let go of economics,
and people become prosperous.

I let go of religion,
and people become serene.
I let go of all desire for the common good,
and the good becomes common as grass.

58

If a country is governed with tolerance,
the people are comfortable and honest.
If a country is governed with repression,
the people are depressed and crafty.

When the will to power is in charge,
the higher the ideals, the lower the results.
Try to make people happy,
and you lay the groundwork for misery.
Try to make people moral,
and you lay the groundwork for vice.

Thus the Master is content
to serve as an example
and not to impose her will.
She is pointed, but doesn't pierce.
Straightforward, but supple.
Radiant, but easy on the eyes.

59

For governing a country well
there is nothing better than moderation.

The mark of a moderate man
is freedom from his own ideas.
Tolerant like the sky,
all-pervading like sunlight,
firm like a mountain,
supple like a tree in the wind,
he has no destination in view
and makes use of anything
life happens to bring his way.

Nothing is impossible for him.
Because he has let go,
he can care for the people's welfare
as a mother cares for her child.

60

Governing a large country
is like frying a small fish.
You spoil it with too much poking.

Center your country in the Tao
and evil will have no power.
Not that it isn't there,

but you'll be able to step out of its way.

Give evil nothing to oppose
and it will disappear by itself.

61

When a country obtains great power,
it becomes like the sea:
all streams run downward into it.
The more powerful it grows,
the greater the need for humility.
Humility means trusting the Tao,
thus never needing to be defensive.

A great nation is like a great man:
When he makes a mistake, he realizes it.
Having realized it, he admits it.
Having admitted it, he corrects it.
He considers those who point out his faults
as his most benevolent teachers.
He thinks of his enemy
as the shadow that he himself casts.

If a nation is centered in the Tao,
if it nourishes its own people
and doesn't meddle in the affairs of others,
it will be a light to all nations in the world.

65

The ancient Masters
didn't try to educate the people,
but kindly taught them to not-know.

When they think that they know the answers,
people are difficult to guide.
When they know that they don't know,
people can find their own way.

If you want to learn how to govern,
avoid being clever or rich.
The simplest pattern is the clearest.
Content with an ordinary life,
you can show all people the way
back to their own true nature.

66

All streams flow to the sea
because it is lower than they are.
Humility gives it its power.

If you want to govern the people,
you must place yourself below them.
If you want to lead the people,

you must learn how to follow them.

The Master is above the people,
and no one feels oppressed.
She goes ahead of the people,
and no one feels manipulated.
The whole world is grateful to her.
Because she competes with no one,
no one can compete with her.

67

Some say that my teaching is nonsense.
Others call it lofty but impractical.
But to those who have looked inside themselves,
this nonsense makes perfect sense.
And to those who put it into practice,
this loftiness has roots that go deep.

I have just three things to teach:
simplicity, patience, compassion.
These three are your greatest treasures.
Simple in actions and in thoughts,
you return to the source of being.
Patient with both friends and enemies,
you accord with the way things are.
Compassionate toward yourself,
you reconcile all beings in the world.

75

When taxes are too high,
people go hungry.

When the government is too intrusive,
people lose their spirit.

Act for the people's benefit.
Trust them; leave them alone.

80

If a country is governed wisely,
its inhabitants will be content.

They enjoy the labor of their hands
and don't waste time inventing
labor-saving machines.

Since they dearly love their homes,
they aren't interested in travel.

There may be a few wagons and boats,
but these don't go anywhere.

There may be an arsenal of weapons,
but nobody ever uses them.

People enjoy their food,
take pleasure in being with their families,
spend weekends working in their gardens,
delight in the doings of the neighborhood.

And even though the next country is so close
that people can hear its roosters crowing and its dogs barking,
they are content to die of old age
without ever having gone to see it.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. According to Lao-tzu, what must the ruler provide the people with if they are to be happy? See especially Verse 66.
2. To what extent does Lao-tzu concern himself with individual happiness?
3. How would you describe Lao-tzu's attitude toward the people?
4. Why does Lao-tzu think the world cannot be improved? See Verse 29.
5. Which statements made in this selection do you feel support a materialist view of experience? Can they be reconciled with Lao-tzu's overall thinking in the selection?
6. What are the limits and benefits of the expression: "Practice not-doing, / and everything will fall into place"? See Verse 3.
7. To what extent is Lao-tzu in favor of military action? What seem to be his views about the military? See Verse 31.
8. The term *Master* is used frequently in the selection. What can you tell about the character of the Master?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. The term *the Tao* is used often in this selection. Write a short essay that defines what Lao-tzu seems to mean by the term. If you were a politician and had the responsibility of governing a state, how would

you follow the Tao as it is implied in Lao-tzu's statements? Is the Tao restrictive? Difficult? Open to interpretation? How well do you think it would work?

2. Write a brief essay that examines the following statements from the perspective of a young person today:

The more prohibitions you have,
the less virtuous people will be.
The more weapons you have,
the less secure people will be.
The more subsidies you have,
the less self-reliant people will be. (Verse 57)

To what extent do you agree with these statements, and to what extent do you feel they have political importance? Do people in the United States seem to agree with these views, or do they disagree? What are the most visible political consequences of our nation's position regarding these ideas?

3. Some people have asserted that the American political system benefits the people most when the following views of Lao-tzu are carefully applied:

Therefore the Master says:
I let go of the law,
and people become honest.
I let go of economics,
and people become prosperous.
I let go of religion,
and people become serene.
I let go of all desire for the common good,
and the good becomes common as grass. (Verse 57)

In a brief essay, decide to what extent American leaders follow these precepts. Whether you feel they do or not, do you think that they should follow these precepts? What are the likely results of their being put into practice?

4. Some of the statements Lao-tzu makes are so packed with meaning that it would take pages to explore them. One example is “When they think that they know the answers, / people are difficult to guide.” Take this statement as the basis of a short essay and, in reference to a personal experience, explain its significance.
5. What does Lao-tzu imply about the obligation of the state to the individuals it governs and about the obligation of the individual to the state? Is one much more important than the other? Using the text in this selection, establish what you feel is the optimum balance between the two.

CONNECTIONS

1. [Martin Luther King Jr.](#) read many classical writings of East Asia. To what extent is it possible to deduce that King probably read Lao-tzu? Consider Verse 53: “The great Way is easy, / yet people prefer the side paths. / Be aware when things are out of balance. / Stay centered within the Tao.” How much of King’s thinking on politics and the law seems in agreement with Lao-tzu?
2. Compare Lao-tzu’s view of government with that of [Machiavelli](#). Consider what seems to be the ultimate purposes of government, what seem to be the obligations of the leader to the people being led, and what seems to be the main work of the state. What comparisons can you make between Lao-tzu’s Master and Machiavelli’s prince?



Niccolò Machiavelli *The Qualities of the Prince*



Topham/The Image Works

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI (1469–1527) was an aristocrat whose fortunes wavered according to the shifts in power in Florence. Renaissance Italy was a collection of powerful city-states, which were sometimes volatile and unstable. When Florence's famed Medici princes were returned to power in 1512 after eighteen

years of banishment, Machiavelli did not fare well. He was suspected of crimes against the state and imprisoned. Even though he was not guilty, he had to learn to support himself as a writer instead of continuing his career in civil service.

His works often contrast two forces: luck (one's fortune) and character (one's virtues). His own character outlasted his bad luck in regard to the Medicis, and he was returned to a position of responsibility. *The Prince* (1513), his most celebrated work, was a general treatise on the qualities the prince (that is, ruler) must have to maintain power. In a more particular way, it was directed at the Medicis to encourage them to save Italy from the predatory incursions of France and Spain, whose troops were nibbling at the crumbling Italian principalities and who would, in time, control much of Italy.

The chapters presented here contain the core of the philosophy for which Machiavelli became famous. His instructions to the prince are curiously devoid of any high-sounding moralizing or any encouragement to be good as a matter of principle. Instead, Machiavelli recommends a very practical course of action for the prince: secure power by direct and effective means. It may be that Machiavelli fully expects that the prince will use his power for good ends — certainly he does not recommend tyranny. But he also supports using questionable means to achieve the final end of becoming and remaining the prince. Although Machiavelli recognizes that there is often a conflict between the ends and the means used to achieve them, he does not fret over the possible problems that may accompany the use of unpleasant means,

such as punishment of upstarts or the use of repression, imprisonment, and torture.

Through the years, Machiavelli's view of human nature has come under criticism for its cynicism. For instance, he suggests that a morally good person would not remain long in any high office because that person would have to compete with the mass of people, who, he says, are basically bad. Machiavelli constantly tells us that he is describing the world as it really is, not as it should be. Perhaps Machiavelli is correct, but people have long condemned the way he approves of cunning, deceit, and outright lying as a means of staying in power.

The contrast between Machiavelli's writings and Lao-tzu's opinions in the *Tao-Te Ching* is instructive. Lao-tzu's advice issues from a detached view of a universal ruler; Machiavelli's advice is very personal, embodying a set of directives for a specific prince. Machiavelli expounds on a litany of actions that must be taken; Lao-tzu, on the other hand, advises that judicious inaction will produce the best results.

MACHIAVELLI'S RHETORIC

Machiavelli's approach is less poetic and more pragmatic than Lao-tzu's. Whereas Lao-tzu's tone is almost biblical, Machiavelli's is that of a how-to book, relevant to a particular time and a particular place. Yet, like Lao-tzu, Machiavelli is brief and to the point. Each segment of the discussion is terse and economical.

Machiavelli announces his primary point clearly, refers to historical precedents to support his point, and then explains why his position is the best one by appealing to both common sense and historical experience. When he suspects the reader will not share his view wholeheartedly, he suggests an alternate argument and then explains why it is wrong. This is a very forceful way of presenting one's views. It gives the appearance of fairness and thoroughness — and, as we learn from reading Machiavelli, he is very much concerned with appearances. His method also gives his work fullness, a quality that makes us forget how brief it really is.

Another of his rhetorical methods is to discuss opposite pairings, including both sides of an issue. From the first he explores a number of oppositions — the art of war and the art of life, liberality and stinginess, cruelty and clemency, the fox and the lion. The method may seem simple, but it is important because it employs two of the basic techniques of rhetoric — comparison and contrast.

The aphorism is another of Machiavelli's rhetorical weapons. An aphorism is a saying — a concise statement of a principle — that has been accepted as true. Familiar examples are “A penny saved is a penny earned” and “There is no fool like an old fool.” Machiavelli tells us, “A man who wishes to make a vocation of being good at all times will come to ruin among so many who are not good.”

Such definite statements have several important qualities. One is that they are pithy: they seem to say a great deal in a few words. Another is that they appear to contain a great deal of wisdom, in part because they are delivered with such certainty and in part because they have the ring of other aphorisms that we accept as true. Because they sound like aphorisms, they gain a claim to (unsubstantiated) truth, and we tend to accept them much more readily than perhaps we should. This may be why the speeches of contemporary politicians (modern versions of the prince) are often sprinkled with such expressions, illustrating that Machiavelli's rhetorical technique is still reliable, effective, and worth studying.



PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Niccolò Machiavelli's "The Qualities of the Prince." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. Why does Machiavelli praise skill in warfare in his opening pages?
How does that skill aid a prince?
2. Is it better for a prince to be loved or to be feared?

From *The Prince*. Translated by Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa.

The Qualities of the Prince

A Prince's Duty Concerning Military Matters

A prince, therefore, must not have any other object nor any other thought, nor must he take anything as his profession but war, its institutions, and its discipline; because that is the only profession which befits one who commands; and it is of such importance that not only does it maintain those who were born princes, but many times it enables men of private station to rise to that position; and, on the other hand, it is evident that when princes have given more thought to personal luxuries than to arms, they have lost their state. And the first way to lose it is to neglect this art; and the way to acquire it is to be well versed in this art.

Francesco Sforza¹ became Duke of Milan from being a private citizen because he was armed; his sons, since they avoided the inconveniences of arms, became private citizens after having been dukes. For, among the other bad effects it causes, being disarmed makes you despised; this is one of those infamies a prince should guard himself against, as will be treated below: for between an armed and an unarmed man there is no comparison whatsoever, and it is not reasonable for an armed man to obey an unarmed man willingly, nor that an unarmed man should be safe among armed servants; since, when the former is suspicious and the latter are contemptuous, it is impossible for them to work well together. And therefore, a prince who does not understand military

matters, besides the other misfortunes already noted, cannot be esteemed by his own soldiers, nor can he trust them.

He must, therefore, never raise his thought from this exercise of war, and in peacetime he must train himself more than in time of war; this can be done in two ways: one by action, the other by the mind. And as far as actions are concerned, besides keeping his soldiers well disciplined and trained, he must always be out hunting, and must accustom his body to hardships in this manner; and he must also learn the nature of the terrain, and know how mountains slope, how valleys open, how plains lie, and understand the nature of rivers and swamps; and he should devote much attention to such activities. Such knowledge is useful in two ways: first, one learns to know one's own country and can better understand how to defend it; second, with the knowledge and experience of the terrain, one can easily comprehend the characteristics of any other terrain that it is necessary to explore for the first time; for the hills, valleys, plains, rivers, and swamps of Tuscany,² for instance, have certain similarities to those of other provinces; so that by knowing the lay of the land in one province one can easily understand it in others. And a prince who lacks this ability lacks the most important quality in a leader; because this skill teaches you to find the enemy, choose a campsite, lead troops, organize them for battle, and besiege towns to your own advantage.

Philopoemon, Prince of the Achaeans,³ among the other praises given to him by writers, is praised because in peacetime he thought of nothing except the means of waging war; and when he

was out in the country with his friends, he often stopped and reasoned with them: “If the enemy were on that hilltop and we were here with our army, which of the two of us would have the advantage? How could we attack them without breaking formation? If we wanted to retreat, how could we do this? If they were to retreat, how could we pursue them?” And he proposed to them, as they rode along, all the contingencies that can occur in an army; he heard their opinions, expressed his own, and backed it up with arguments; so that, because of these continuous deliberations, when leading his troops no unforeseen incident could arise for which he did not have the remedy.

But as for the exercise of the mind, the prince must read histories and in them study the deeds of great men; he must see how they conducted themselves in wars; he must examine the reasons for their victories and for their defeats in order to avoid the latter and to imitate the former; and above all else he must do as some distinguished man before him has done, who elected to imitate someone who had been praised and honored before him, and always keep in mind his deeds and actions; just as it is reported that Alexander the Great imitated Achilles; Caesar, Alexander; Scipio, Cyrus.⁴ And anyone who reads the life of Cyrus written by Xenophon then realizes how important in the life of Scipio that imitation was to his glory and how much, in purity, goodness, humanity, and generosity, Scipio conformed to those characteristics of Cyrus that Xenophon had written about.

Such methods as these a wise prince must follow, and never in peaceful times must he be idle; but he must turn them diligently to

his advantage in order to be able to profit from them in times of adversity, so that, when Fortune changes, she will find him prepared to withstand such times.

On Those Things for Which Men, and Particularly Princes, Are Praised or Blamed

Now there remains to be examined what should be the methods and procedures of a prince in dealing with his subjects and friends. And because I know that many have written about this, I am afraid that by writing about it again I shall be thought of as presumptuous, since in discussing this material I depart radically from the procedures of others. But since my intention is to write something useful for anyone who understands it, it seemed more suitable to me to search after the effectual truth of the matter rather than its imagined one. And many writers have imagined for themselves republics and principalities that have never been seen nor known to exist in reality; for there is such a gap between how one lives and how one ought to live that anyone who abandons what is done for what ought to be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation: for a man who wishes to make a vocation of being good at all times will come to ruin among so many who are not good. Hence it is necessary for a prince who wishes to maintain his position to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge or not to use it according to necessity.

Hence it is necessary for a prince who wishes to maintain his position to learn

how not to be good, and to use this knowledge or not to use it according to necessity.

Leaving aside, therefore, the imagined things concerning a prince, and taking into account those that are true, I say that all men, when they are spoken of, and particularly princes, since they are placed on a higher level, are judged by some of these qualities which bring them either blame or praise. And this is why one is considered generous, another miserly (to use a Tuscan word, since “avaricious” in our language is still used to mean one who wishes to acquire by means of theft; we call “miserly” one who excessively avoids using what he has); one is considered a giver, the other rapacious; one cruel, another merciful; one treacherous, another faithful; one effeminate and cowardly, another bold and courageous; one humane, another haughty; one lascivious, another chaste; one trustworthy, another cunning; one harsh, another lenient; one serious, another frivolous; one religious, another unbelieving; and the like. And I know that everyone will admit that it would be a very praiseworthy thing to find in a prince, of the qualities mentioned above, those that are held to be good, but since it is neither possible to have them nor to observe them all completely, because human nature does not permit it, a prince must be prudent enough to know how to escape the bad reputation of those vices that would lose the state for him, and must protect himself from those that will not lose it for him, if this is possible; but if he cannot, he need not concern himself unduly if

he ignores these less serious vices. And, moreover, he need not worry about incurring the bad reputation of those vices without which it would be difficult to hold his state; since, carefully taking everything into account, one will discover that something which appears to be a virtue, if pursued, will end in his destruction; while some other thing which seems to be a vice, if pursued, will result in his safety and his well-being.

On Generosity and Miserliness

Beginning, therefore, with the first of the above-mentioned qualities, I say that it would be good to be considered generous; nevertheless, generosity used in such a manner as to give you a reputation for it will harm you; because if it is employed virtuously and as one should employ it, it will not be recognized and you will not avoid the reproach of its opposite. And so, if a prince wants to maintain his reputation for generosity among men, it is necessary for him not to neglect any possible means of lavish display; in so doing such a prince will always use up all his resources and he will be obliged, eventually, if he wishes to maintain his reputation for generosity, to burden the people with excessive taxes and to do everything possible to raise funds. This will begin to make him hateful to his subjects, and, becoming impoverished, he will not be much esteemed by anyone; so that, as a consequence of his generosity, having offended many and rewarded few, he will feel the effects of any slight unrest and will be ruined at the first sign of danger; recognizing this and wishing to alter his policies, he immediately runs the risk of being reproached as a miser.

A prince, therefore, unable to use this virtue of generosity in a manner which will not harm himself if he is known for it, should, if he is wise, not worry about being called a miser; for with time he will come to be considered more generous once it is evident that, as a result of his parsimony, his income is sufficient, he can defend himself from anyone who makes war against him, and he can undertake enterprises without overburdening his people, so that he comes to be generous with all those from whom he takes nothing, who are countless, and miserly with all those to whom he gives nothing, who are few. In our times we have not seen great deeds accomplished except by those who were considered miserly; all others were done away with. Pope Julius II,⁵ although he made use of his reputation for generosity in order to gain the papacy, then decided not to maintain it in order to be able to wage war; the present King of France⁶ has waged many wars without imposing extra taxes on his subjects, only because his habitual parsimony has provided for the additional expenditures; the present King of Spain,⁷ if he had been considered generous, would not have engaged in nor won so many campaigns.

Therefore, in order not to have to rob his subjects, to be able to defend himself, not to become poor and contemptible, and not to be forced to become rapacious, a prince must consider it of little importance if he incurs the name of miser, for this is one of those vices that permits him to rule. And if someone were to say: Caesar with his generosity came to rule the empire, and many others, because they were generous and known to be so, achieved very high positions; I reply: you are either already a prince or you are on the way to becoming one; in the first instance

such generosity is damaging; in the second it is very necessary to be thought generous. And Caesar was one of those who wanted to gain the principality of Rome; but if, after obtaining this, he had lived and had not moderated his expenditures, he would have destroyed that empire. And if someone were to reply: there have existed many princes who have accomplished great deeds with their armies who have been reputed to be generous; I answer you: a prince either spends his own money and that of his subjects or that of others; in the first case he must be economical; in the second he must not restrain any part of his generosity. And for that prince who goes out with his soldiers and lives by looting, sacking, and ransoms, who controls the property of others, such generosity is necessary; otherwise he would not be followed by his troops. And with what does not belong to you or to your subjects you can be a more liberal giver, as were Cyrus, Caesar, and Alexander; for spending the wealth of others does not lessen your reputation but adds to it; only the spending of your own is what harms you. And there is nothing that uses itself up faster than generosity, for as you employ it you lose the means of employing it, and you become either poor or despised or, in order to escape poverty, rapacious and hated. And above all other things a prince must guard himself against being despised and hated; and generosity leads you to both one and the other. So it is wiser to live with the reputation of a miser, which produces reproach without hatred, than to be forced to incur the reputation of rapacity, which produces reproach along with hatred, because you want to be considered as generous.

On Cruelty and Mercy and Whether It Is Better to Be Loved than to Be Feared or the Contrary

Proceeding to the other qualities mentioned above, I say that every prince must desire to be considered merciful and not cruel; nevertheless, he must take care not to misuse this mercy. Cesare Borgia⁸ was considered cruel; nonetheless, his cruelty had brought order to Romagna,⁹ united it, restored it to peace and obedience. If we examine this carefully, we shall see that he was more merciful than the Florentine people, who, in order to avoid being considered cruel, allowed the destruction of Pistoia.¹⁰

Therefore, a prince must not worry about the reproach of cruelty when it is a matter of keeping his subjects united and loyal; for with a very few examples of cruelty he will be more compassionate than those who, out of excessive mercy, permit disorders to continue, from which arise murders and plundering; for these usually harm the community at large, while the executions that come from the prince harm one individual in particular. And the new prince, above all other princes, cannot escape the reputation of being called cruel, since new states are full of dangers. And Virgil, through Dido, states: “My difficult condition and the newness of my rule make me act in such a manner, and to set guards over my land on all sides.”¹¹

Nevertheless, a prince must be cautious in believing and in acting, nor should he be afraid of his own shadow; and he should proceed in such a manner, tempered by prudence and humanity, so that too much trust may not render him imprudent nor too much distrust render him intolerable.

From this arises an argument: whether it is better to be loved than to be feared, or the contrary. I reply that one should like to be both one and the other; but since it is difficult to join them together, it is much safer to be feared than to be loved when one of the two must be lacking. For one can generally say this about men: that they are ungrateful, fickle, simulators and deceivers, avoiders of danger, greedy for gain; and while you work for their good they are completely yours, offering you their blood, their property, their lives, and their sons, as I said earlier, when danger is far away; but when it comes nearer to you they turn away. And that prince who bases his power entirely on their words, finding himself stripped of other preparations, comes to ruin; for friendships that are acquired by a price and not by greatness and nobility of character are purchased but are not owned, and at the proper moment they cannot be spent. And men are less hesitant about harming someone who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared because love is held together by a chain of obligation which, since men are a sorry lot, is broken on every occasion in which their own self-interest is concerned; but fear is held together by a dread of punishment which will never abandon you.

A prince must nevertheless make himself feared in such a manner that he will avoid hatred, even if he does not acquire love; since to be feared and not to be hated can very well be combined; and this will always be so when he keeps his hands off the property and the women of his citizens and his subjects. And if he must take someone's life, he should do so when there is proper justification and manifest cause; but, above all, he should avoid the property

of others; for men forget more quickly the death of their father than the loss of their patrimony. Moreover, the reasons for seizing their property are never lacking; and he who begins to live by stealing always finds a reason for taking what belongs to others; on the contrary, reasons for taking a life are rarer and disappear sooner.

But when the prince is with his armies and has under his command a multitude of troops, then it is absolutely necessary that he not worry about being considered cruel; for without that reputation he will never keep an army united or prepared for any combat. Among the praiseworthy deeds of Hannibal¹² is counted this: that, having a very large army, made up of all kinds of men, which he commanded in foreign lands, there never arose the slightest dissention, neither among themselves nor against their prince, both during his good and his bad fortune. This could not have arisen from anything other than his inhuman cruelty, which, along with his many other abilities, made him always respected and terrifying in the eyes of his soldiers; and without that, to attain the same effect, his other abilities would not have sufficed. And the writers of history, having considered this matter very little, on the one hand admire these deeds of his and on the other condemn the main cause of them.

And that it be true that his other abilities would not have been sufficient can be seen from the example of Scipio, a most extraordinary man not only in his time but in all recorded history, whose armies in Spain rebelled against him; this came about from nothing other than his excessive compassion, which gave to his

soldiers more liberty than military discipline allowed. For this he was censured in the senate by Fabius Maximus,¹³ who called him the corruptor of the Roman militia. The Locrians,¹⁴ having been ruined by one of Scipio's officers, were not avenged by him, nor was the arrogance of that officer corrected, all because of his tolerant nature; so that someone in the senate who tried to apologize for him said that there were many men who knew how not to err better than they knew how to correct errors. Such a nature would have, in time, damaged Scipio's fame and glory if he had maintained it during the empire; but, living under the control of the senate, this harmful characteristic of his not only concealed itself but brought him fame.

I conclude, therefore, returning to the problem of being feared and loved, that since men love at their own pleasure and fear at the pleasure of the prince, a wise prince should build his foundation upon that which belongs to him, not upon that which belongs to others: he must strive only to avoid hatred, as has been said.

How a Prince Should Keep His Word

How praiseworthy it is for a prince to keep his word and to live by integrity and not by deceit everyone knows; nevertheless, one sees from the experience of our times that the princes who have accomplished great deeds are those who have cared little for keeping their promises and who have known how to manipulate the minds of men by shrewdness; and in the end they have surpassed those who laid their foundations upon honesty.

You must, therefore, know that there are two means of fighting: one according to the laws, the other with force; the first way is proper to man, the second to beasts; but because the first, in many cases, is not sufficient, it becomes necessary to have recourse to the second.

You must, therefore, know that there are two means of fighting: one according to the laws, the other with force; the first way is proper to man, the second to beasts; but because the first, in many cases, is not sufficient, it becomes necessary to have recourse to the second. Therefore, a prince must know how to use wisely the natures of the beast and the man. This policy was taught to princes allegorically by the ancient writers, who described how Achilles and many other ancient princes were given to Chiron¹⁵ the Centaur to be raised and taught under his discipline. This can only mean that, having a half-beast and half-man as a teacher, a prince must know how to employ the nature of the one and the other; and the one without the other cannot endure.

Since, then, a prince must know how to make good use of the nature of the beast, he should choose from among the beasts the fox and the lion; for the lion cannot defend itself from traps and the

fox cannot protect itself from wolves. It is therefore necessary to be a fox in order to recognize the traps and a lion in order to frighten the wolves. Those who play only the part of the lion do not understand matters. A wise ruler, therefore, cannot and should not keep his word when such an observance of faith would be to his disadvantage and when the reasons which made him promise are removed. And if men were all good, this rule would not be good; but since men are a sorry lot and will not keep their promises to you, you likewise need not keep yours to them. A prince never lacks legitimate reasons to break his promises. Of this one could cite an endless number of modern examples to show how many pacts, how many promises have been made null and void because of the infidelity of princes; and he who has known best how to use the fox has come to a better end. But it is necessary to know how to disguise this nature well and to be a great hypocrite and a liar: and men are so simpleminded and so controlled by their present necessities that one who deceives will always find another who will allow himself to be deceived.

I do not wish to remain silent about one of these recent instances. Alexander VI¹⁶ did nothing else, he thought about nothing else, except to deceive men, and he always found the occasion to do this. And there never was a man who had more forcefulness in his oaths, who affirmed a thing with more promises, and who honored his word less; nevertheless, his tricks always succeeded perfectly since he was well acquainted with this aspect of the world.

Therefore, it is not necessary for a prince to have all of the above-mentioned qualities, but it is very necessary for him to appear to

have them. Furthermore, I shall be so bold as to assert this: that having them and practicing them at all times is harmful; and appearing to have them is useful; for instance, to seem merciful, faithful, humane, forthright, religious, and to be so; but his mind should be disposed in such a way that should it become necessary not to be so, he will be able and know how to change to the contrary. And it is essential to understand this: that a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things by which men are considered good, for in order to maintain the state he is often obliged to act against his promise, against charity, against humanity, and against religion. And therefore, it is necessary that he have a mind ready to turn itself according to the way the winds of Fortune and the changeability of affairs require him; and, as I said above, as long as it is possible, he should not stray from the good, but he should know how to enter into evil when necessity commands.

A prince, therefore, must be very careful never to let anything slip from his lips which is not full of the five qualities mentioned above: he should appear, upon seeing and hearing him, to be all mercy, all faithfulness, all integrity, all kindness, all religion. And there is nothing more necessary than to seem to possess this last quality. And men in general judge more by their eyes than their hands; for everyone can see but few can feel. Everyone sees what you seem to be, few perceive what you are, and those few do not dare to contradict the opinion of the many who have the majesty of the state to defend them; and in the actions of all men, and especially of princes, where there is no impartial arbiter, one must consider the final result.¹⁷ Let a prince therefore act to seize and to

maintain the state; his methods will always be judged honorable and will be praised by all; for ordinary people are always deceived by appearances and by the outcome of a thing; and in the world there is nothing but ordinary people; and there is no room for the few, while the many have a place to lean on. A certain prince¹⁸ of the present day, whom I shall refrain from naming, preaches nothing but peace and faith, and to both one and the other he is entirely opposed; and both, if he had put them into practice, would have cost him many times over either his reputation or his state.

On Avoiding Being Despised and Hated

But since, concerning the qualities mentioned above, I have spoken about the most important, I should like to discuss the others briefly in this general manner: that the prince, as was noted above, should think about avoiding those things which make him hated and despised; and when he has avoided this, he will have carried out his duties and will find no danger whatsoever in other vices. As I have said, what makes him hated above all else is being rapacious and a usurper of the property and the women of his subjects; he must refrain from this; and in most cases, so long as you do not deprive them of either their property or their honor, the majority of men live happily; and you have only to deal with the ambition of a few, who can be restrained without difficulty and by many means. What makes him despised is being considered changeable, frivolous, effeminate, cowardly, irresolute; from these qualities a prince must guard himself as if from a reef, and he must strive to make everyone recognize in his actions greatness, spirit, dignity, and strength; and concerning the private affairs of his subjects, he must insist that his decision be irrevocable; and

he should maintain himself in such a way that no man could imagine that he can deceive or cheat him.

That prince who projects such an opinion of himself is greatly esteemed; and it is difficult to conspire against a man with such a reputation and difficult to attack him, provided that he is understood to be of great merit and revered by his subjects. For a prince must have two fears: one, internal, concerning his subjects; the other, external, concerning foreign powers. From the latter he can defend himself by his good troops and friends; and he will always have good friends if he has good troops; and internal affairs will always be stable when external affairs are stable, provided that they are not already disturbed by a conspiracy; and even if external conditions change, if he is properly organized and lives as I have said and does not lose control of himself, he will always be able to withstand every attack, just as I said that Nabis the Spartan¹⁹ did. But concerning his subjects, when external affairs do not change, he has to fear that they may conspire secretly: the prince secures himself from this by avoiding being hated or despised and by keeping the people satisfied with him; this is a necessary matter, as was treated above at length. And one of the most powerful remedies a prince has against conspiracies is not to be hated by the masses; for a man who plans a conspiracy always believes that he will satisfy the people by killing the prince; but when he thinks he might anger them, he cannot work up the courage to undertake such a deed; for the problems on the side of the conspirators are countless. And experience demonstrates that conspiracies have been many but few have been concluded successfully; for anyone who conspires

cannot be alone, nor can he find companions except from amongst those whom he believes to be dissatisfied; and as soon as you have uncovered your intent to one dissatisfied man, you give him the means to make himself happy, since he can have everything he desires by uncovering the plot; so much is this so that, seeing a sure gain on the one hand and one doubtful and full of danger on the other, if he is to maintain faith with you he has to be either an unusually good friend or a completely determined enemy of the prince. And to treat the matter briefly, I say that on the part of the conspirator there is nothing but fear, jealousy, and the thought of punishment that terrifies him; but on the part of the prince there is the majesty of the principality, the laws, the defenses of friends and the state to protect him; so that, with the good will of the people added to all these things, it is impossible for anyone to be so rash as to plot against him. For, where usually a conspirator has to be afraid before he executes his evil deed, in this case he must be afraid, having the people as an enemy, even after the crime is performed, nor can he hope to find any refuge because of this.

One could cite countless examples on this subject; but I want to satisfy myself with only one which occurred during the time of our fathers. Messer Annibale Bentivoglio, prince of Bologna and grandfather of the present Messer Annibale, was murdered by the Canneschi²⁰ family, who conspired against him; he left behind no heir except Messer Giovanni,²¹ then only a baby. As soon as this murder occurred, the people rose up and killed all the Canneschi. This came about because of the goodwill that the house of the Bentivoglio enjoyed in those days; this goodwill was so great that

with Annibale dead, and there being no one of that family left in the city who could rule Bologna, the Bolognese people, having heard that in Florence there was one of the Bentivoglio blood who was believed until that time to be the son of a blacksmith, went to Florence to find him, and they gave him the control of that city; it was ruled by him until Messer Giovanni became of age to rule.

I conclude, therefore, that a prince must be little concerned with conspiracies when the people are well disposed toward him; but when the populace is hostile and regards him with hatred, he must fear everything and everyone. And well-organized states and wise princes have, with great diligence, taken care not to anger the nobles and to satisfy the common people and keep them contented; for this is one of the most important concerns that a prince has.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. The usual criticism of Machiavelli is that he advises his prince to be unscrupulous. Find examples for and against this claim.
2. Why do you agree or disagree with Machiavelli when he asserts that the great majority of people are not good? Does our government assume that to be true too?
3. Politicians — especially heads of state — are the contemporary counterparts of the prince. To what extent should successful heads of modern states show skill in war? Is modern war similar to wars in Machiavelli's era? If so, in what ways?
4. Clarify the advice Machiavelli gives concerning liberality and stinginess. Is this still good advice?

5. Are modern politicians likely to succeed by following all or most of Machiavelli's recommendations? Why or why not?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

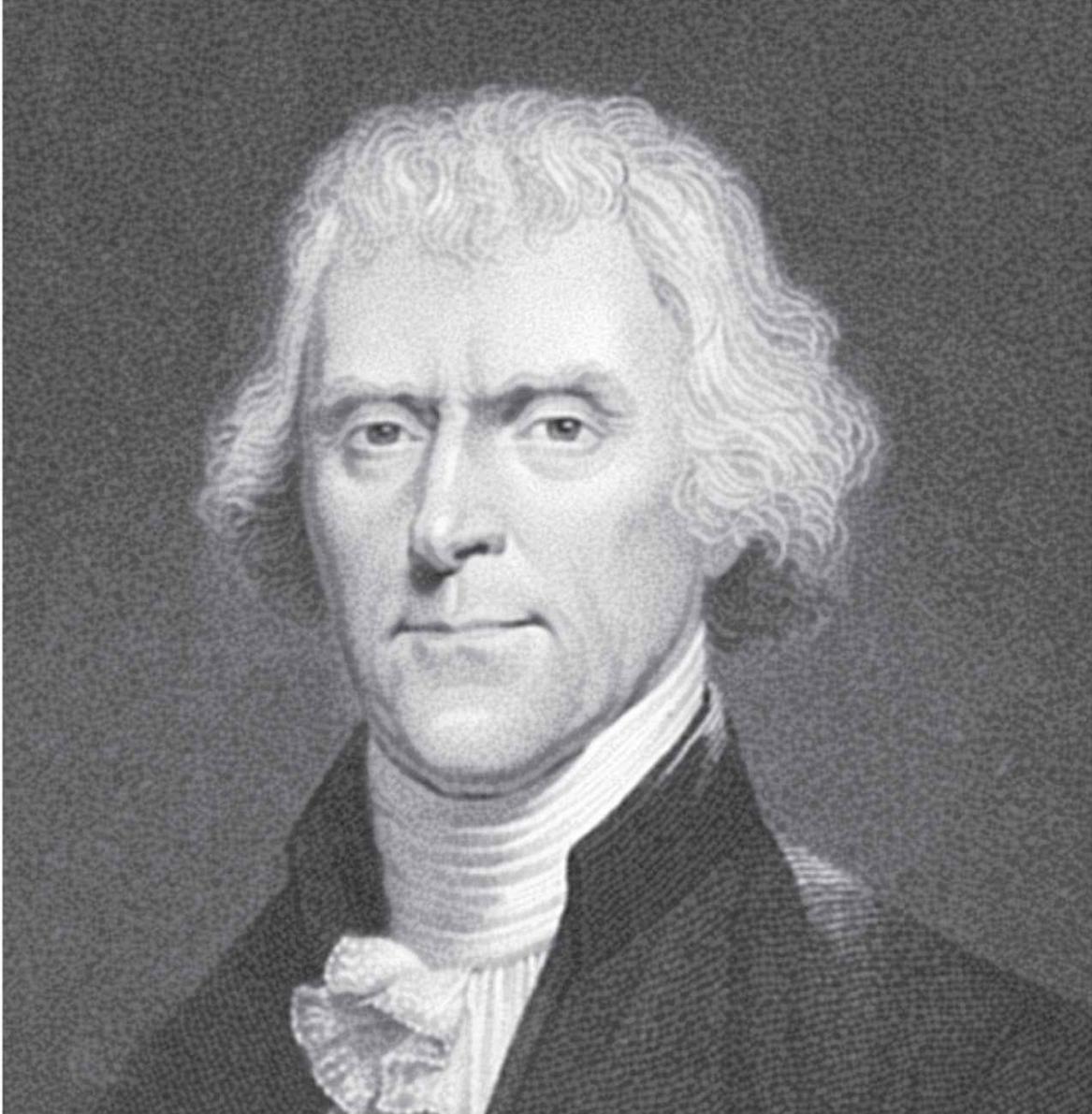
1. In speaking of the prince's military duties, Machiavelli says that "being disarmed makes you despised." Choose an example or instance to strengthen your argument for or against this position. Is it possible that in modern society being defenseless is an advantage?
2. Find evidence within this excerpt to demonstrate that Machiavelli's attitude toward human nature is accurate. Remember that the usual criticism of Machiavelli is that he is cynical — that he thinks the worst of people rather than the best. Find quotations from the excerpt that support either or both of these views; then use them as the basis for an essay analyzing Machiavelli's views on human nature.
3. By referring to current events and leaders — either local, national, or international — decide whether Machiavelli's advice to the prince is useful to the modern politician. Consider whether the advice is completely useless or completely reliable or whether its value depends on specific conditions. First state the advice, then show how it applies (or does not apply) to specific politicians, and finally critique its general effectiveness.
4. Probably the chief ethical issue raised by *The Prince* is the question of whether the desired ends justify the means used to achieve them. Write an essay in which you take a stand on this question. Begin by defining the issue: What does the concept "the ends justify the means" actually mean? What difficulties may arise when unworthy means are used to achieve worthy ends? Analyze Machiavelli's references to circumstances in which questionable means were (or should have been) used to achieve worthy ends. Use historical or personal examples to give your argument substance.

CONNECTIONS

1. One of Machiavelli's most controversial statements is, "A man who wishes to make a vocation of being good at all times will come to ruin among so many who are not good." How would [Lao-tzu](#) respond to this statement? How does the current American political environment support this statement? Under what conditions would such a statement become irrelevant?
2. [Thomas Jefferson](#) read Machiavelli's writings carefully and understood his warnings to those in rule. Jefferson participated in a revolution that overthrew a powerful king, a prince even greater than Borgia. What did Jefferson learn from Machiavelli that helped him achieve his goal? Does the behavior of King George resemble the behavior of Machiavelli's prince? How does Jefferson analyze the behavior of the King? Does King George's behavior seem to have developed from the principles that Machiavelli asks his prince to follow? Would Machiavelli have approved of some of the applications of power that the king employs?
3. Machiavelli writes extensively about the characteristics of the prince and how the prince must maintain power. [José Ortega y Gasset](#) writes extensively about the power of the state. Compare the positions these authors take and establish the relationship of the prince to the state. To what degree are they the same concept? How would Machiavelli advise a modern politician and ruler of a state to behave? What would be his deepest concerns?



Thomas Jefferson *The Declaration of Independence*



ARPL/HIP/The Image Works

THOMAS JEFFERSON (1743–1826) authored one of the most memorable statements in American history: the Declaration of Independence. He composed the work in 1776 under the watchful eyes of Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and the rest of the Continental Congress, who spent two and a half days going over

every word. Although the substance of the document was developed in committee, Jefferson, because of the grace of his writing style, was selected to craft the actual wording.

Jefferson rose to eminence in a time of great political upheaval. By the time he took a seat in the Virginia legislature in 1769, the colony was already on the course toward revolution. His pamphlet “A Summary View of the Rights of British America” (1774) brought him to the attention of those who were agitating for independence and established him as an ardent republican and revolutionary. In 1779 he was elected governor of Virginia. After the Revolutionary War he moved into the national political arena as the first secretary of state (1790–1793). He then served as John Adams’s vice president (1797–1801) and was himself elected president in 1800. Perhaps one of his greatest achievements during his two terms (1801–1809) in office was his negotiation of the Louisiana Purchase, in which the United States acquired from France 828,000 square miles of land west of the Mississippi for about \$15 million.

One of the fundamental paradoxes of Jefferson’s personal and political life has been his attitude toward slavery. In 1784 he tried to abolish slavery in the western territories that were being added to the United States, but his “Report on Government for the Western Territory” failed by one vote. However, like most wealthy Virginians, Jefferson owned slaves, including a woman named Sally Hemings, and it is likely that Jefferson was the father of six of Sally Hemings’s children. Four of these children survived; however, they were not freed until the 1820s, four of only five

enslaved people Jefferson freed in his will. Hemings was freed by Jefferson's daughter upon his death, after which she lived with her two sons in Charlottesville until she died in 1835. Following his death, most of Jefferson's more than 200 slaves were sold to pay off his debts, shattering family communities and perpetuating the institution of slavery that Jefferson had said he was against.

However inconsistent his convictions on slavery, many of Jefferson's accomplishments, which extend from politics to agriculture and mechanical invention, still stand. One of the most versatile Americans of any generation, he wrote a book, *Notes on Virginia* (1782); designed and built Monticello, his famous homestead in Virginia; and in large part founded and designed the University of Virginia (1819).

Despite their revolutionary nature, the ideas Jefferson expressed in the Declaration of Independence were not entirely original. Jean Jacques Rousseau's republican philosophies, and those of other Enlightenment thinkers, greatly influenced the work. When Jefferson states in the second paragraph that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights," he reflects Rousseau's emphasis on the political equality of men and on protecting certain fundamental rights. Jefferson also wrote that "Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." This is one of Rousseau's primary points, although it was Jefferson who immortalized it in these words.

JEFFERSON'S RHETORIC

Jefferson's techniques include the use of the periodic sentence, which was especially typical of the age. The first sentence of the Declaration of Independence is periodic — that is, it is long and carefully balanced, and the main point comes at the end. Such sentences are not popular today, although an occasional periodic sentence can still be powerful in contemporary prose. Jefferson's first sentence says (in paraphrase): *When one nation must sever its relations with a parent nation ... and stand as an independent nation itself ... the causes ought to be explained.* Moreover, the main body of the Declaration of Independence lists the “causes” that lead to the final and most important element of the sentence. Causal analysis was a method associated with legal thought and reflects Jefferson's training in eighteenth-century legal analysis. One understood things best when one understood their causes.

The periodic sentence demands certain qualities of balance and parallelism that all good writers should heed. The first sentence in [paragraph 2](#) demonstrates both qualities. The balance is achieved by making each part of the sentence roughly the same length. The parallelism is achieved by linking words in deliberate repetition for effect (they are in italicized type in the following analysis). Note how the “truths” mentioned in the first clause are enumerated in the succession of noun clauses beginning with “that”; “Rights” are enumerated in the final clause:

We hold these truths to be self-evident,
 that all men are created equal,
 that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable

Rights,
that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of
Happiness.

Parallelism is one of the greatest stylistic techniques available to a writer sensitive to rhetoric. It is a natural technique: many untrained writers and speakers develop it on their own. The periodicity of the sentences and the balance of their parallelism suggest thoughtfulness, wisdom, and control.

Parallelism creates a natural link to the useful device of enumeration, or listing. Many writers using this technique establish their purpose from the outset — “I wish to address three important issues ...” — and then number them: “First, I want to say ... Second ...,” and so on. Jefferson devotes [paragraphs 3](#) through [29](#) to enumerating the “causes” he mentions in [paragraph 1](#). Each one constitutes a separate paragraph; thus, each has separate weight and importance. Each begins with “He” or “For” and is therefore in parallel structure. The technique of repetition of the same words at the beginning of successive lines is called *anaphora*. Jefferson’s use of anaphora here is one of the best known and most effective in all literature. The “He” referred to is Britain’s King George III (1738–1820), who is never mentioned by name. Congress is opposed not to a personality but to the sovereign of a nation that is oppressing the United States and a tyrant who is not dignified by being named. The “For” introduces grievous acts the king has given his assent to; these are offenses against the colonies.

However, Jefferson does not develop the causes in detail. We do not have specific information about what trade was cut off by the British, what taxes were imposed without consent, or how King George waged war or abdicated government in the colonies. Presumably, Jefferson's audience knew the details and was led by the twenty-seven paragraphs to observe how numerous the causes were. All are serious; any one alone was enough cause for revolution. The effect of Jefferson's enumeration is to illustrate the patience of the colonies up to that point and to tell the world that the colonies had finally lost patience on account of the reasons listed. The Declaration of Independence projects the careful meditations and decisions of exceptionally calm, patient, and reasonable people.



PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. Under what conditions may a people alter or abolish their government?
2. Why does Jefferson consider King George a tyrant?

The Declaration of Independence

In Congress, July 4, 1776

The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the

pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. — Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his

Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their Public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavored to prevent the population of these States;¹ for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migration hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our People, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislature.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their acts of pretended Legislation:

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from Punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offenses:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighboring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with Power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation, and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the

executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free People.

Nor have We been wanting in attention to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the

Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States, that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

■ ■ ■ ■ QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What laws of nature does Jefferson refer to in [paragraph 1](#)?
2. What do you think Jefferson feels is the function of government ([para. 2](#))?
3. What does Jefferson say about women? Is there any way you can determine his views from reading this document? Does he appear to favor a patriarchal system?
4. Find at least one use of parallel structure in the Declaration (see the section on [Jefferson's rhetoric for a description of parallelism](#)). What key terms are repeated in identical or equivalent constructions, and to what effect?
5. Which causes listed in [paragraphs 3](#) through [29](#) are the most serious? Are any trivial? Which ones are serious enough to cause a revolution?

6. What do you consider to be the most graceful sentence in the entire Declaration? Where is it placed in the Declaration? What purpose does it serve there?
7. In what ways does the king's desire for stable government interfere with Jefferson's sense of his own independence?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Jefferson defines the inalienable rights of a citizen as “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” Do you think these are indeed inalienable rights? Answer this question by including some sentences that use parallel structure and repeat key terms in similar constructions. Be certain that you define each of these rights both for yourself and for our time.
2. Write an essay discussing what you feel the function of government should be. Include at least three periodic sentences (underline them). You may first want to establish Jefferson's view of government and then compare or contrast it with your own.
3. Jefferson envisioned a government that allowed its citizens to exercise their rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Has Jefferson's revolutionary vision been achieved in America? Begin with a definition of these three key terms: *life*, *liberty*, and *the pursuit of happiness*. Then, for each term, use examples — drawn from current events, your own experience, or American history — to take a clear and well-argued stand on whether the nation has achieved Jefferson's goal.
4. Slavery was legal in America in 1776, and Jefferson owned slaves. He never presented his plan for gradual emancipation of the slaves to Congress because he realized that Congress would never approve it. But Jefferson and Franklin did finance a plan to buy slaves and return them to Africa, where in 1821 formerly enslaved people founded the nation of Liberia. Agree or disagree with the following statement and defend your position: the ownership of slaves by the people who wrote the Declaration of Independence invalidates it. You may wish to

read the relevant chapters on Jefferson and slavery in Merrill D. Peterson's *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation* (1970), or conduct further research at your college library or online.

5. What kind of government does Jefferson seem to prefer? In what ways would his government differ from that of the king he is reacting against? Is he talking about an entirely different system or about the same system but with a different kind of "prince" at the head? How would Jefferson protect the individual against the whim of the state, while also protecting the state against the whim of the individual?

CONNECTIONS

1. Write an essay in which you examine the ways in which Jefferson agrees or disagrees with [Lao-tzu's](#) conception of human nature and of government. How does Jefferson share Lao-tzu's commitment to judicious inactivity? What evidence is there that the king subscribes to it? Describe the similarities and differences between Jefferson's views and those of Lao-tzu.
2. [Cornel West](#) argues for the presence of a deep tradition in America for guarding and reforming our democracy. West discusses Emerson and Melville, but how might he use Thomas Jefferson to prove his point? Is Jefferson talking about democracy as much as he is talking about power and the possibility of rebellion? How does Jefferson, in the Declaration of Independence, reveal his determination to establish a democracy in America in place of a colonial government administered in a foreign land?



Francis Fukuyama *Why Did Democracy Spread?*



Colin McPherson/Corbis Entertainment/Getty Images

FRANCIS FUKUYAMA (b. 1952) is the Olivier Nomellini Senior Fellow at Stanford University's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies. Prior to that, he taught at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies of the Johns Hopkins University and at the George Mason University of Public Policy.

Fukuyama, known early in his career as a neoconservative political philosopher, altered his thinking following the events of the Iraq War and today is considered a relatively centrist thinker. He earned his undergraduate degree in classics from Cornell University, where he also studied political philosophy with Alan Bloom, and he was awarded his doctorate in Government from Harvard University. He first rose to prominence after an early scholarly article of his (which later became a book) proclaimed the end of history in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union.

Because of the sensational critical reception to his argument in *The End of History*, Fukuyama has written a number of explanations that further clarified his views. He has since said that when he wrote that we had reached the end of history, what he meant was not that history was no longer being written, but instead that the evolution of social governmental systems had reached its peak in the form of liberal democratic governments. As he wrote in an article in *The Guardian* (October 11, 2001): “And if we looked beyond liberal democracy and markets, there was nothing else towards which we could expect to evolve; hence the end of history. While there were retrograde areas that resisted that process, it was hard to find a viable alternative civilization that people actually wanted to live in after the discrediting of socialism, monarchy, fascism and other types of authoritarianism.”

Among Fukuyama’s most important books are *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (1995), *The Great Disruption: Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order* (1999), *State-*

Building: Governance and World Order in the Twenty-First Century (2004), *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy* (2006), and *The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* (2018). While most of these books concern various issues of governance and their effects on large populations, under their surface runs a deeper issue: how human nature adapts to different types of governments and how human nature actually shapes governments. The democratic state with its market economy seems, to Fukuyama, to have evolved because of what we call human nature; it exists because of our needs.

Political Order and Political Decay (2014), the book in which the following selection appears, is the second volume of a major study of politics begun with *The Origins of Political Order* (2011). Fukuyama's scope includes not just the development of the West and Western political systems, but also the developments in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. He considers issues of geography and natural resources, as in "Silver, Cold, and Sugar," the title of one of his chapters, and he examines several strong Asian governments in his exploration of the question of law throughout the world.

In the third part of his *Political Order and Political Decay*, part of which is excerpted here, he analyzes the origin and spread of democracy, with a particular look at the periods of disorder and revolution in the nineteenth century. It was in the period after the uprisings in Europe in 1848 that democracy began to be embraced in one form or another as a desirable experiment.

Visitors to the United States, such as the French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville in 1835, studied the phenomenon of functional democracy in America and reported their findings, often with surprise and enthusiasm.

Fukuyama sees the middle class as largely responsible for the success of democracy and credits economic improvement and social mobility as key factors in the recent spread of democracy in Asia and elsewhere. Fukuyama examines the theories of earlier political thinkers such as Marx, pointing out that Marx's focus on workers overlooked the rise of the middle class, something that Marx would not have imagined. The question of the middle class persists today, with great anxiety about the middle class in the United States, which is threatened by increasing inequality in income since the 1980s.

FUKUYAMA'S RHETORIC

An analysis of the economic and political history of Japan, China, and other Asian nations dominates the beginning of this selection, with Fukuyama pointing to the fact that these countries had historically stable governments for thousands of years, but because of the nature of their economies did not encounter democracy until the twentieth century. China, of course, is still a communist nation, although it has integrated capitalist practices into many parts of its economy. While China has expanded economically while remaining communist, Fukuyama argues that the rapid economic growth Japan and South Korea have

experienced has contributed to their status as relatively stable democracies, a contradiction he explores.

The first pages of the selection introduce specific dates and data, but Fukuyama also quotes from the intellectual Samuel Huntington, introducing a key term, the “Third Wave” of democracy. While the United States enjoyed democracy from its founding, Huntington sees the first wave beginning in 1820, with the second wave following immediately after World War II. He dates the third wave to the early 1970s, with transitions to democracy in Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Turkey, along with a number of South American countries. Fukuyama notes that the Arab Spring, which began in 2011, may be considered part of this third wave, although its results have been mixed with regard to democratic governance.

Fukuyama’s primary rhetorical strategy is to provide an answer to the question in the title of the selection: Why did democracy spread? He recognizes that there is no easy answer to this question, which naturally gives him elbow room to explore a number of possibilities. He relies on the technique of enumeration early by saying “One answer to the question” ([para. 4](#)) is that democracy is a very powerful idea. He introduces a second suggestion in [paragraph 7](#) by pointing to social scientists who feel that it is not just ideas that make democracy popular, but “deep structural forces within societies.” This leads him to posit that most rich industrialized societies are democracies in large part because of the high level of economic development.

Because of his interest in the theories of Marx, Fukuyama takes a moment to consider his views about the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, which Marx saw as antagonists. Marx promoted the idea of a dictatorship of the proletariat, but Fukuyama ultimately argues that Marx's failure was a failure of imagination. Marx could not imagine the rise of the middle class, which had already begun in his time. Not only does Fukuyama credit the middle class with some of the driving energy that caused the spread of democracy, but he supports the view that until the appearance of the bourgeoisie in society there would be no drive toward democracy.

Fukuyama relies on enumeration again beginning with [paragraph 19](#) when he uses Arabic numerals to organize his comments on the “major social actors” who have an important role in the spread of democracy. The first is the middle class, which he defines in terms of occupation and education level rather than in terms of income. He argues that people in the middle class concern themselves more with social issues such as gay rights, abortion, gun rights, and other identity concerns than with any class issues. These issues cross all imaginable class lines and therefore make narrow views of class almost unrecognizable in the sense that Marx understood the term.

The second group Fukuyama considers is the working class, Marx's proletariat, which Fukuyama writes is notable for its interest in redistributing wealth and its willingness throughout the twentieth century to support nondemocratic parties, such as communists or fascists, both of which promised “redistribution at the expense of liberal individual rights.” Fukuyama sees the

blurring of the working class and the middle class in the late nineteenth century as a result of the rise of industrialization, technology, and the movement of large sectors of agricultural workers into factories and technically advanced work.

Fukuyama then turns to the third group, the large landowners, who rely on the cheap labor of workers who own very little property and no land. According to Fukuyama, these landowners have little or no interest in democracy, and until they disappear as a social group, their voices must be cast aside. The fourth group, the “peasantry,” works for the landowners and is traditionally very conservative and resists change, although Fukuyama notes that, in the twentieth century, this group has participated in revolutions across the developing world.

Fukuyama also points to the rise of political parties, which he views as important to the growth and sustenance of modern democracies. Interestingly, he notes that political parties do not usually represent separate social classes, but incorporate most or all classes at different times because other concerns beside class issues cause people to support a political party. Conservatives come from all social classes, as do liberals. As Fukuyama explains, they are bound to parties usually because of cultural traditions or beliefs.

Finally, an effective rhetorical technique Fukuyama uses in this selection, which is typical for the disciplines of political science and economics, is the charts that attempt to establish the primary forces that spread or impede the spread of democracy. The last of

the charts spells out some of the most important points made in the selection, namely that economic growth and social mobilization are the forces that lead to the acceptance of democracy, and these forces also lead to the creation of political parties and the rule of law. They are the underpinnings of modern democracy and its spread.



PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Francis Fukuyama's "Why Did Democracy Spread?" Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. Which historical period produced the most new democracies?
2. What role does social mobility play in the rise of democracies?
3. Why would a prosperous middle class support a democratic form of government?

Why Did Democracy Spread?

Japan, China, and other societies in East Asia were heirs to a long tradition of government and could presuppose the existence of a strong state as they began to industrialize in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Prior to this point, they were highly unequal agrarian societies in which a small elite exercised a monopoly of power over a large mass of largely unorganized peasants. I suggested that the state-society balance began to change with the onset of rapid economic growth, and that the authoritarian system in contemporary China will face significant challenges as new social groups are mobilized and begin to demand a share of political power. Will this lead to the eventual appearance of formal democratic accountability in China? We have no way of predicting such an outcome. What we can do is to try to understand the process of democratization in other parts of the world and what implications it may hold for the future.

Between 1970 and 2010, the number of democracies around the world increased from about 35 to nearly 120, or some 60 percent of the world's countries, in what Samuel Huntington¹ called the Third Wave of democratization. According to him, the first long wave began in the 1820s and continued through the end of the nineteenth century, while the second short wave happened in the immediate aftermath of World War II. The Third Wave began with the democratic transitions in Spain and Portugal in the early 1970s and continued through the end of military rule in Greece and Turkey, followed by a series of Latin American countries

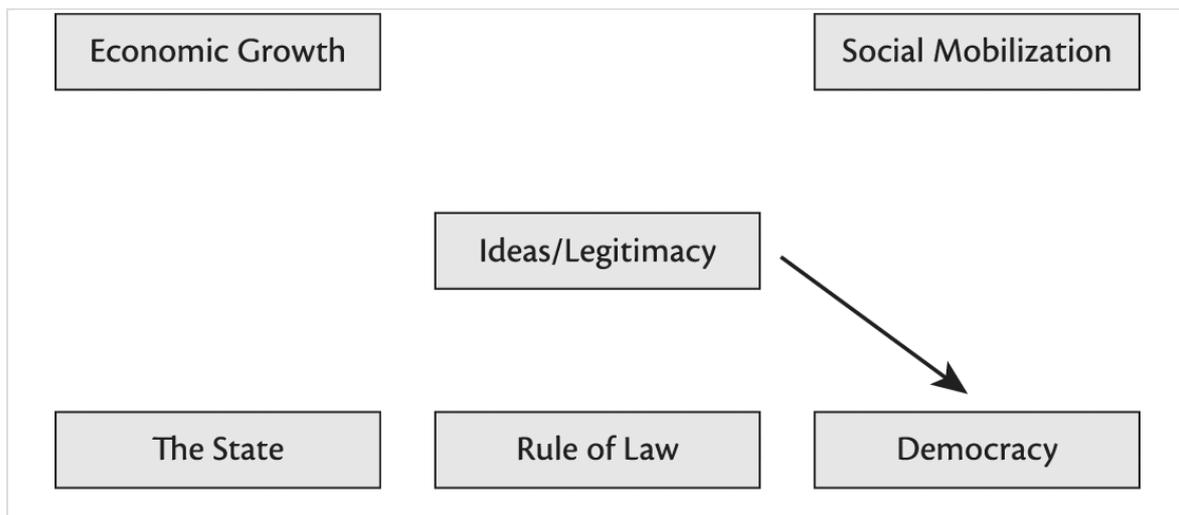
including Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile; then it moved to Asia with the democratization of the Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan; and culminated in the collapse of communism and the transition to democracy in Eastern Europe and some of the successor states of the former Soviet Union. Democracy expert Larry Diamond² has argued that there has been a recession of the Third Wave in the 2000s. While the outbreak of the Arab Spring in early 2011 suggested to some observers the start of a Fourth Wave, setbacks in Egypt, Libya, and Syria have made this a less compelling argument.

Why did these waves of democratization occur? Why did they occur in some regions and societies and not others? Why were some waves successful in establishing relatively stable democracies while others were rolled back? And why did democracy become a global phenomenon only during the twentieth century and not in the roughly four hundred prior centuries of human history?

One answer to the question of why democracy spread has been put forward in a number of different variants: democracy has taken hold as the result of the power of the underlying idea of democracy. This was stated forcefully by Alexis de Tocqueville³ in his introduction to *Democracy in America*. He noted that the idea of human equality that underlies modern democracy had been gaining ground for the preceding eight hundred years, and it had acquired an unstoppable momentum that aroused in him a “kind of religious dread.” He regarded its progress as a providential fact. Other authors have agreed that ideas were critical and have

traced them to specific historical and cultural roots, either in ancient Athens or in Christianity. Both Hegel and Nietzsche⁴ understood modern political democracy to be a secularized version of the Christian doctrine of the universal equality of human dignity. Hegel in particular saw developments in the material world such as the French Revolution and the emergence of the principle of equal recognition as the working out of the inner logic of human rationality. During the Third Wave itself, as well as during the more recent Arab Spring, ideas clearly propagated rapidly across international borders via radio, television, the Internet, and flows of activists bringing news of political upheavals elsewhere. The wave of democratic transitions occurring in sub-Saharan Africa during the early 1990s was clearly inspired by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dramatic developments taking place in Eastern Europe shortly before.

In terms of the framework built around the six dimensions of development laid out in [chapter 2](#), theories focusing on ideas or cultural values would posit a causal relationship looking something like [Figure 19](#).



But while ideas are indeed powerful and can explain much about political institutions, this kind of explanation begs as many questions as it settles. Why, for instance, do the ideas of human equality or democracy take off in some periods and not in others? The idea of democracy has been around at least since ancient Athens, and yet it did not become institutionalized anywhere until the end of the eighteenth century. Tocqueville does not explain why the idea of human equality became progressively more powerful, except to suggest that it was an act of God. Democracy did not arise in all parts of the world, nor has it gained traction equally across the globe. This has led to the assertion, made by parties as diverse as Samuel Huntington, the contemporary Chinese government, and a variety of Islamists, that liberal democracy does not represent a universal trend but is something culturally specific to Western civilization. If this is true, it still begs the question of why this particular idea arose in the West and not elsewhere.

An alternative school of thought understands democracy not as the expression of an idea or a set of cultural values but as the by-product of deep structural forces within societies. Social scientists have long noted that there is a correlation between high levels of economic development and stable democracy: most of the world's rich industrialized countries today are democracies, whereas most remaining authoritarian states are much less developed. One well-known study shows that while countries may transition from

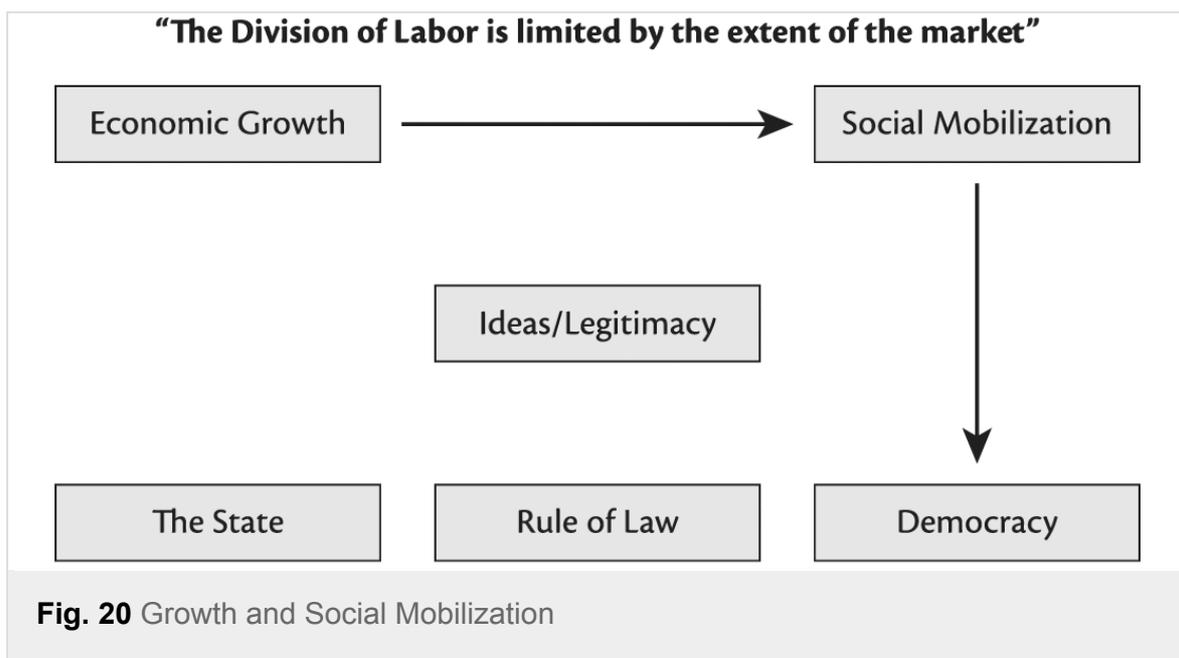
authoritarian to democratic government at any level of development, they are much more likely to remain democracies if they rise above a certain threshold of per capita income. This suggests *prima facie*⁵ that there may be something in the process of economic development that makes democracy more likely.

But what is the connection between economic development and democracy? Do people's values somehow magically flip over to favor democracy when they achieve a certain level of well-being? The statistical correlations linking development and democracy provide no insight as to specific causal mechanisms that connect the two. Within all of these correlations, moreover, there are many exceptions: for example, according to this view, impoverished India should not be a stable democracy yet wealthy Singapore should.

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In [chapter 2](#), I suggested an alternative causal path by which economic growth could affect democratic institutions, via social mobilization. The key concept here is the division of labor. Adam Smith⁶ asserted that the division of labor is limited by the size of

the market, or, put differently, that as markets expanded through increased trade in a commercial and later an industrial economy, a new division of labor would arise and deepen. This division of labor entailed the creation of new social groups. Although Smith himself never made this argument explicitly, it follows logically that these new groups, excluded from participation in the political institutions of the old agrarian society, would demand a share of political power and therefore increase pressures for democracy. Economic growth, in other words, engendered social mobilization, which in turn led to increasing demands for political participation (along the lines of [Figure 20](#)).



Description
 Six text boxes read as follows: Economic growth, Social mobilization, Ideas/Legitimacy, The State, Rule of law, and Democracy. Economic growth points to Social mobilization. Social mobilization points to Ideas/Legitimacy, which in turn points to Democracy. Social Mobilization also branches out to Political parties which in turn points to Rule of law and Democracy.

Smith's description of the changing division of labor was one of the central concepts that preoccupied the major social theorists of the nineteenth century. First was Karl Marx,⁷ who made the division of labor integral to his own doctrine by transforming it into a theory of social classes.

Marx's Insight

Marx's framework can be summarized as follows. Out of the old feudal order, the first new social class to be mobilized is the bourgeoisie, townsmen who were regarded contemptuously by the old landowners but who accumulated capital and used new technologies to bring about the Industrial Revolution. This revolution in turn mobilized a second new class, the proletariat, whose surplus labor the bourgeoisie unjustly appropriated. Each of these three classes wanted a different political outcome: the traditional landowning class wanted to preserve the old authoritarian order; the bourgeoisie wanted a liberal (i.e., rule of law) regime protecting their property rights that might or might not include formal electoral democracy (they were always more interested in the rule of law than in democracy); and the proletariat, once it achieved consciousness of itself as a class, wanted a dictatorship of the proletariat, which would in turn socialize the means of production, abolish private property, and redistribute wealth. The working class might support electoral democracy in the form of universal suffrage, but this was a means to the end of control over the means of production, not an end in itself.

One of the most important scholars working in a post-Marxist tradition was Barrington Moore,⁸ whose 1966 book *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* has already been noted in connection with Japan (see [chapter 23](#) above). This complex book presented a series of historical case studies, including Britain, Germany, Japan, China, Russia, and India, and tried to explain why democracy emerged in some countries and not in others. He is probably best remembered for his blunt observation: “No bourgeoisie, no democracy.” By this he did not mean that the rise of the bourgeoisie inevitably produced democracy. In Germany, for example, the industrial bourgeoisie allied itself with the autocratic Junker landowning aristocracy in the famous marriage of “iron and rye” that upheld Bismarckian⁹ authoritarianism, and later played some role in the rise of Hitler. Rather, Moore argued that democracy could emerge if a rapidly enlarging bourgeoisie succeeded in displacing the older order of landowners and peasants. This happened in England, he noted, as an entrepreneurial bourgeoisie in the countryside succeeded in commercializing agriculture, driving peasants off the land, and using the proceeds to fund the Industrial Revolution. This cruel process had the effect of weakening the power of the old landed aristocracy while producing a modern working class.

Moore also paid particular attention to the form of agricultural production in a way that Marx did not. Marx largely ignored the peasantry, assuming that it would be eliminated by capitalist industrialization as it had been in England. However, revolutions broke out in Russia and China, where the vast majority of the population were peasants. Lenin and Mao¹⁰ came to power on the

backs of peasants, despite the fact that Marx believed they were a class destined ultimately to disappear. Moore, taking these cases into account, argued that democratization faced special obstacles under conditions of what he called “labor-repressive” agriculture, in which peasants were tied to the land in large, concentrated estates. The result was the survival of an authoritarian landowning class, which in turn spawned worker-peasant revolutionary movements. Between these two extremes, the prospect of a middle-class democracy was poor. We have already seen this scenario play out in several Latin American countries noted above.

Barrington Moore’s book has spawned a vast literature that contests many of the points he made, but particularly his assertion that the bourgeoisie or middle classes were critical to the emergence of democracy. Without going into the details of the scholarly controversy, it is clear that his hypothesis would have to be modified in certain important ways. For example, the bourgeoisie is far from being a unified group. It includes large industrialists like the Thyssens and Rockefellers¹¹ as well as small shopkeepers and urban professionals that the Marxists frequently referred to contemptuously as “petty bourgeois.” The interests of these different segments varied according to circumstance; in many cases, important middle-class groups did not invariably support democracy. And though the working class could be recruited into radical antidemocratic Communist or agrarian movements, many working-class organizations in fact lined up solidly in support of democratic voting rights and rule of law.

It is important to note that the two components of liberal democracy — liberal rule of law and mass political participation — are separable political goals that initially tended to be favored by different social groups. Thus the middle-class authors of the French Revolution were not, as many historians have pointed out, committed democrats in the sense that they wanted immediate expansion of the franchise to peasants and workers. The Rights of Man were conceived as legal guarantees that would protect the property and personal freedoms of the bourgeoisie, limiting the power of the state but not necessarily empowering the mass of French citizens. Similarly, the Whigs, who forced the constitutional settlement on the English king during the Glorious Revolution in the previous century, were largely wealthy taxpayers that included part of the aristocracy, the gentry, and the upper middle classes. Their ranks were joined in the succeeding two centuries by the growing numbers of commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, as well as by middle-class lawyers, doctors, civil servants, teachers, and other professionals set off from the working classes by their education and property ownership. These groups constituted the base of support for the British Liberal Party during the nineteenth century. The main interest of the Liberals tended to be rule of law much more than democracy — that is, legal protection for private property and individual rights, as well as policies such as free trade, meritocratic civil service reform, and public education that would make possible upward mobility.

Over time, however, the liberal and the democratic agendas began to converge, and democracy became a middle-class goal. Rule of law and democratic accountability are, after all, alternative

means of constraining power, and in practice are often mutually supportive. Protection of property rights against arbitrary state predation requires political power, which in turn can be achieved through expansion of the franchise. Similarly, citizens demanding the right to vote can be protected by a rule of law that restricts the government's ability to repress them. The right to vote came to be seen as just another protected legal right. Liberal democracy — a political system embodying both rule of law and universal suffrage — thus evolved into a single package desired by both middle-class groups and a significant part of the working class.

democracy is desired most strongly by one specific social group in society: the middle class

Barrington Moore was not himself a Marxist in the sense of wanting to see the victory of communism around the world. He saw liberal democracy as a desirable outcome while appreciating the powerful social forces that often made it unattainable. In this spirit, the Marxist analytical framework as modified by Moore remains extremely useful as a means of understanding how and why democracy spreads. The key insight is that democracy is desired most strongly by one specific social group in society: the middle class. If we are to understand the likelihood of democracy emerging, we need to evaluate the strength of the middle class relative to other social groups that prefer other forms of

government, such as the old landed oligarchy who are inclined to support authoritarian systems, or radicalized groups of peasants or urban poor who are focused on economic redistribution. Modern democracy has a social basis, and if we don't pay attention to it, we will not be able to properly evaluate the prospects of democratic transitions.

We can summarize the major social actors whose relative strength and interactions determine the likelihood that democracy will emerge in a given society. These were the dominant groups that existed in Europe as the continent democratized during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; they are also groups that exist in many contemporary developing countries.

1. The middle classes, defined in occupational and educational terms rather than by level of income. They tended to support the liberal part of liberal democracy. That is, they wanted legal rules that protected their rights and particularly their property from predatory government. They may or may not have been supporters of democracy, understood as universal political participation, and they were even more ambivalent about if not overtly opposed to economic redistribution that might affect their own property and income. Middle-class groups were the primary leaders of the democratic transitions that took place in Denmark, Greece, France, Argentina, Portugal, and Spain in the nineteenth century, and were important parts of the coalitions that pressed for full democratization in Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Britain in the early twentieth.

2. The working classes — Marx’s famous industrial proletariat — were conversely more interested in the democratic part of liberal democracy, meaning their own right to participate politically. They joined forces with middle-class groups to press for full expansion of the franchise in Denmark, Belgium, Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, and Britain. However, they were more interested in economic redistribution than the middle classes and often more focused on redistribution than liberal guarantees of property rights. For this reason significant parts of the working class around the world were willing to support nondemocratic anarchosyndicalist parties¹² in the nineteenth century (as in Southern Europe or much of Latin America), or Communist or Fascist parties in the twentieth, parties that promised redistribution at the expense of liberal individual rights.
3. Large landowners, and particularly those making use of repressive labor (slavery, serfdom, or other nonmarket conditions of labor), have almost everywhere been authoritarian opponents of democracy. One of the most enduring of Barrington Moore’s insights is the need to break the power of this particular social group by one means or another before full democracy can flourish.
4. The peasantry had complicated and sometimes inconsistent political aspirations. In many societies they were an extremely conservative group, embracing traditional social values and willing to live in subordinate positions as clients of the landowning class. One of the earliest counterrevolutionary movements was the peasant uprising of the Vendée in 1793 that opposed the revolutionary government in Paris. As we saw in the Greek and Italian cases, they could be mobilized by conservative parties using clientelistic methods.¹³ Under

the right circumstances, however, they could be radicalized to join forces with the working classes as supporters of revolution. They became the foot soldiers of the Bolshevik, Chinese, and Vietnamese revolutions.

These four groups constituted the major social actors whose interactions determined the course of political development and democratic transition in the nineteenth century. At the beginning of this period, virtually all of the world's most advanced countries were dominated by the last two of these groups, a landowning oligarchy¹⁴ and the peasantry. Increasing industrialization induced peasants to leave the countryside and enter the working class, and by the beginning of the twentieth century they were the largest social group. Under the impact of expanding trade, the number of middle-class individuals began to swell, first in Britain and the United States, then in France and Belgium, and by the late nineteenth century in Germany, Japan, and other "late developers." This then set the stage for the major social and political confrontations of the early twentieth century.

The Centrality of Political Parties

Useful as it is, one of the weaknesses of Marx's analytical framework is his use of "class" as a key determining variable. Marx sometimes talks as if social classes — the bourgeoisie, the proletariat, feudalists—were clearly defined political actors capable of purposive rational decision making. In reality, social classes are intellectual abstractions, useful analytically but incapable of producing political action unless they are embodied in specific organizations. Newly mobilized social groups can participate

politically in a wide variety of ways: through strikes and demonstrations, by use of the media, or today, through channels like Facebook and Twitter. Citizens can organize civil society groups to press for particular causes, or for mutual support. But if participation is to be enduring, it needs to be institutionalized, which for the past two centuries has meant the formation of political parties.

Thus the four groups listed above did not spring into the world as cohesive political actors like Athena from the head of Zeus. They had to be politically mobilized and represented by political parties. It is for this reason that political parties have been considered necessary to the success of any democracy, despite the fact that they were unanticipated by many early democratic theorists. Conservative parties like the Tory Party in Britain or the German Imperial Party started out as elite political factions that only later were forced to organize themselves as mass parties that could contest elections. The middle classes were represented by various liberal parties, like the Liberals in Britain or the Progress Party, the Left Liberals, or the National Liberals in Germany. The working class was mobilized under the banner of Socialist parties like the British Labour Party and the German Social Democratic Party, or, by the early twentieth century, the various Communist parties that had begun to appear on the fringes of the political landscape in virtually all industrializing societies. The peasants were the least well-organized social group. In Britain, the United States, Denmark, and Sweden, they had largely disappeared by the late nineteenth century because they had been converted into independent family farmers, or else simply driven off the land. In

Greece and Italy, peasants were actually represented by conservative parties that used patronage to control them; in Bulgaria, they succeeded in forming their own party.

A central problem with any simple class-based analysis of democratization is that there were a number of cross-cutting issues that united people across class lines and blurred the class profiles of political parties. Among the most important were ethnicity, religion, and foreign policy. Thus the German Reichstag in the late nineteenth century contained parties representing the Polish and Danish minorities, as well as the Centre Party, which stood for Catholic interests and was itself divided into left and right wings. Issues like imperial policy and the building of a navy were conservative causes that drew working-class support. In Britain, there were sharp divisions over Irish Home Rule and empire that were often as important as class considerations in determining election outcomes. In the contemporary Middle East, Islamist parties tend to have a social base in the lower classes and in rural areas, but their overt message is based on religion rather than class.

Thus, while political parties may try to represent the interests of particular social classes, they are very often also autonomous political actors that can get power by mobilizing voters from different classes by shifting their agendas from economic ones to identity politics, religion, or foreign policy. They do not actually have to represent the true interests of the social classes that support them. At one extreme, the Communist Parties in Russia and China ended up being among the greatest oppressors of

workers and peasants in human history. In the United States, the Republican Party, traditionally the bastion of business interests, gets substantial support from working-class voters who support it on cultural rather than economic grounds.

Like state bureaucracies, political parties are not simply robotic arms controlled by underlying social classes. Rather, they can exercise a great deal of choice in how they represent their constituents. Political parties are created by political entrepreneurs who organize followings around particular ideas and who then go on to organize real-world political machines. Successful Communist parties required the organizational genius of leaders like Vladimir Lenin to come to power. Conservative parties were animated by ideas about tradition, religion, monarchy, and stability. As their underlying social bases went into decline and they were forced to compete for mass electorates, some, like the British Conservatives, were able to change their agendas to make themselves appealing to middle- and working-class electorates. Others, like the Italian Christian Democrats, survived and prospered through their ability to organize vast clientelistic networks. Those conservative parties that failed to adapt to these new conditions of electoral politics were tempted to resort to nondemocratic methods for preserving their power, like the Argentine coup of 1930 (see [chapter 18](#) above). Clientelistic party organization often went hand in hand with a personalistic political style, in which supporters were rallied around particular charismatic individuals like Juan and Eva Perón¹⁵ rather than around a coherent program. Organizational capacity was thus not something that could be readily predicted simply by looking at the

strength of different social classes. It depended on historically contingent factors like leadership, personality, and ideas.

Economic Growth, Social Mobilization, and Democracy

Why did democracy spread, and why might it spread farther in the future? Democratic institutions are driven by multiple causes, but one of the most important centers on economic change. Economic growth is linked to democracy in a multistage process, as illustrated in [Figure 21](#). Economic growth engenders social mobilization via the spreading division of labor, and social mobilization in turn produces demands for both rule of law and greater democracy. The traditional elites that dominated the old agrarian order frequently try to block entry of the newer groups into the system. A stable democratic system will emerge only if these newly mobilized groups are successfully incorporated into the system and allowed to participate politically. Conversely, instability and disorder will occur if those groups do not have institutionalized channels of participation.

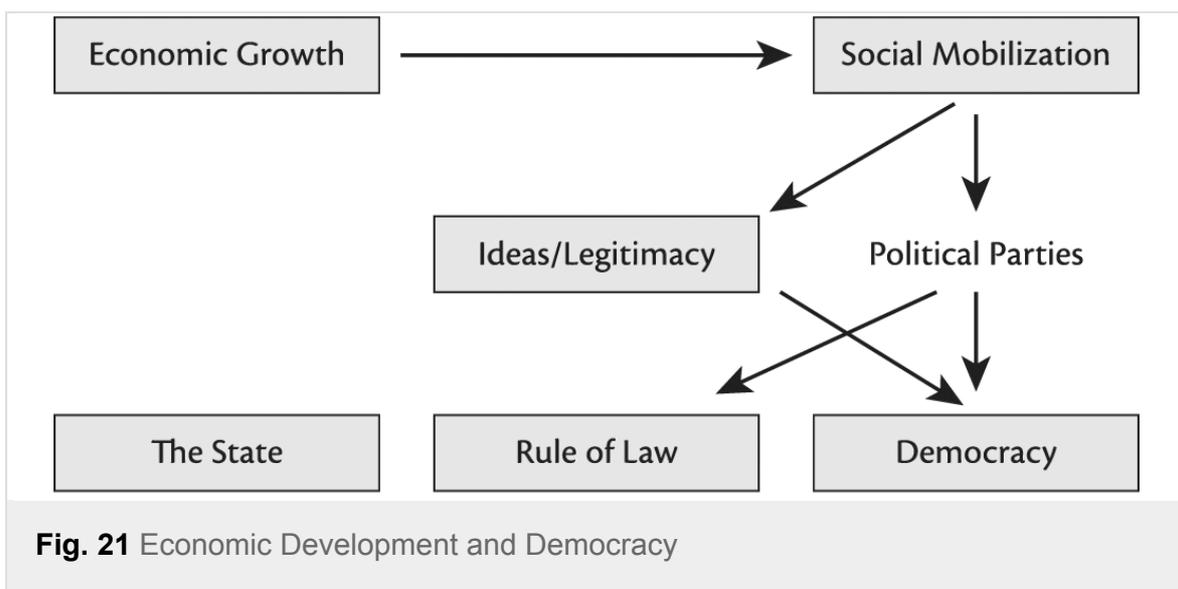


Fig. 21 Economic Development and Democracy

Description

Six text boxes read as follows: Economic growth, Social mobilization, Ideas/Legitimacy, The State, Rule of law, and Democracy. Economic growth points to Social mobilization. Social mobilization points to Ideas/Legitimacy, which in turn points to Democracy. Social Mobilization also branches out to Political parties which in turn points to Rule of law and Democracy.

In this context, ideas can still be very important, but they are related to changes in the other dimensions of development. For example, the idea of the universal equality of human dignity has been around for centuries, but in static agrarian societies it never gained much traction because such societies had an extremely low degree of social mobility. Peasants periodically revolted and challenged the political status quo. This could be sparked by some outrageous violation of their rights, or out of sheer hunger and desperation. But while individual leaders of such revolts might aspire to join the oligarchy, it never occurred to them to displace the class-bound system as such. Hence they never became true revolutionaries. The idea of social equality acquired a broad galvanizing power only when in parts of Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries an expanding capitalist economic system started reordering the social system. Modern capitalism both required and produced social mobility, and as a consequence demands for equality of access and opportunity expanded. There are thus multiple lines of causality linking social mobilization to democracy and the rule of law. Ideas were important and had their own autonomy — neither Adam Smith nor Karl Marx could be understood as a mere spokesman for the

social class out of which he sprang — but receptivity to ideas was shaped by social context and deep economic changes.

Democracy emerged in Europe in gradual stages over a 150-year period, as a result of struggles among the middle classes, working class, old oligarchy, and peasantry, all being shaped in turn by underlying changes in the economy and society. The Marx-Moore framework, with a few emendations, remains basically sound. It is this story that I will flesh out in the following chapter.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. Where has the number of democracies increased between 1970 and the present?
2. What role did the idea of human equality play in the formation of democracies?
3. How did radio, television, and the Internet help produce democracies?
4. Which modern industrial nations are not democracies?
5. Which social class seems most to want democratic government?
6. What historically has been the role of the large landowners in choice of government?
7. What role do political parties have in the creation and stability of democracies?

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Fukuyama discusses the roles that different social classes have in creating a demand for democratic forms of government. He talks

about the bourgeoisie, the working class, the middle class, large landowners, and the peasantry. The concept of social class in the United States is more fluid than in many countries. Write an essay that establishes which social classes you feel exist in our country and then define each in a way that would convince your audience that you fully understand the qualities of each social class.

2. The French used the term *bourgeoisie* to refer to the rising moneyed classes that blossomed in many European nations in the early 1800s, after the French Revolution. The term *bourgeoisie* has often been used in a critical sense; for example, Karl Marx was antagonistic toward the bourgeoisie because of what he saw as their complacency with the status quo. However, Fukuyama writes, “no bourgeoisie, no democracy” ([para. 12](#)), implying that democracies are most likely to rise when there is a substantial bourgeois social class. Define the terms *bourgeois* and *bourgeoisie* and explain why Fukuyama’s argument might be true. You might also consider whether there a bourgeois class in the United States. If so, how would you define it and what connections would you draw between its presence and the state of U.S. democracy?
3. Write an essay that accounts for the development of democracies in what Samuel Huntington called “the Third Wave of democratization” ([para. 2](#)). Huntington refers directly to the new democracies in Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey, and several Latin American countries. Choose one of these nations and research its form of government from the 1970s onward in order to explain how democracy works there. Is the country politically stable, and has its stability changed over time? Does it seem to be a true democracy?
4. Fukuyama writes that Hegel and Nietzsche are said to have “understood modern political democracy to be a secularized version of the Christian doctrine of the universal equality of human dignity” ([para. 4](#)). To what extent do you agree with this view? Is the concept of universal equality part of the beliefs of other religions? What does it mean to secularize the ideas or values of a religion? Do you think that democracy, as a political system, has a definite relationship with any religious teaching? How would you defend or attack Hegel and Nietzsche’s opinion, as Fukuyama has characterized it?

5. Throughout the essay Fukuyama talks about social mobility as an important factor in the rise of democracies. In a brief essay explain what *social mobility* means to Fukuyama and then what it means to you. If possible, use examples to demonstrate how much mobility individuals can expect in modern society. How important is social mobility to you? How important does it seem to be to your parents and your peers? If social mobility were impossible, how would you feel?
6. Why do you think democracy has spread in the last two centuries? What are the advantages of democratic government over socialist planned governments, such as communism as it was practiced in China, Cuba, and the Soviet Union? Of course, modern democracies have their critics as well, who point to the strength of China's government and economy or cite the difficulties in getting things done in democracies. What is the appeal of democracies? Which form of government do you advocate and why?

■ ■ CONNECTIONS

7. Examine the views of Karl Marx in "[The Communist Manifesto](#)", who defends a communist form of government in which the proletariat (the working people) have control of government. Explain why he would reject our form of democracy and what fault he finds in it. Fukuyama tells us that Marx's views are limited because societies have changed dramatically since 1848 and the rise of the middle class invalidates his theory. Examine both essays to see where Fukuyama and Marx agree and where they disagree. How valid is Fukuyama's rejections of Marx's ideas?
8. In "[The Greatest Danger, The State](#)", Ortega talks about the tyranny of the state in order to clarify what an illiberal non-democratic government can be. How do laws function in the states Ortega describes? Fukuyama writes that the working classes (Marx's proletariat) like some of the advantages of democracy but not others. The working class supports strong laws but also supports the redistribution of wealth and would be "willing to support

nondemocratic” ([para. 20](#)) governments, as happened in fascist Italy and Germany. Examine the ways in which Ortega and Fukuyama support each other’s views about government. Do you agree with Fukuyama about the working class’s willingness to support nondemocratic government? Support your argument using examples from the world today.



José Ortega Y Gasset *The Greatest Danger, the State*



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JOSÉ ORTEGA Y GASSET (1883–1955) was Spain's most important philosopher. He received his doctorate from Complutense University of Madrid in 1904 when he was barely twenty-one. He studied further in Germany at Berlin, Leipsig, and Marburg, where he was influenced by a group of philosophers

studying the work of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), whose late work in metaphysics insisted on a “categorical imperative” that established a clear moral principle. When Ortega returned to Spain, he took a teaching job in 1909 only to be appointed professor of philosophy at the Complutense University of Madrid in 1910. Later, his essays on two major writers of the twentieth century, Marcel Proust and James Joyce, established him as an international figure and one of the most influential humanists in Spain.

Ortega was not only an academic. He also participated in the government of Spain in the early 1930s and was named civil governor of Madrid. When the civil war took hold in Spain and the lines were clearly drawn between communists (called Republicans) and fascists (called Nationalists) under Francisco Franco (1892–1975), Ortega — because of his position — refused to take sides. He left Spain and went into voluntary exile to protest the civil war and its outcome: the victory of the fascist, or Nationalist, forces and the elevation of Franco as Spain’s dictator.

Ortega settled in Portugal in 1945 when the war in Europe was over. Despite the oppressive rule of Franco, he returned to Madrid in 1948 and established the Institute of Humanities, where he worked relatively unharassed by the authorities. His writings ranged from literature to sociology to aesthetics. One of his earliest works, *Meditations on Quixote* (1914), examined the symbols of Spanish writing, linking them to the Spanish people. In *Invertebrate Spain* (1922), he challenged what he felt was the spineless leadership in the period following World War I. He

pleaded for the establishment of a United States of Europe — a development that eventually took shape in the 1990s as the European Union.

One of his most influential books, *The Dehumanization of Art* (1925), insisted that modern art appeals to a special aesthetic sensibility. It is not the same sensibility that we bring to a view out our window of a lovely mountain. It is not the same sensibility that we bring to our observation of people in our lives. In Ortega's words, the artist cultivates "specifically aesthetic sentiments." These feelings are different from those that a person might express in an everyday human situation. Therefore, the feelings that we understand as human emotions may be of great importance to us in daily life but of little importance in contemplating a work of art.

His best-known book, *The Revolt of the Masses* (first published in 1930), contains a political theme. Ortega feared that democracy as it was developing in Europe had within it the seeds of tyranny by the masses. He saw such a threat in Russian communism and in the fascism of Italy. He also feared that rapid population growth and occupational specialization would rob people of a common cultural past and cultural identity. Such a condition made it easier for a tyranny by the masses to take over and to tolerate or even execute modern horrors, such as the concentration camps and extermination ovens of Nazi Germany.

Even before the Spanish civil war, Ortega had observed the growing power of postrevolutionary Russia, which suffered its own

civil war from 1917 to 1922, and the rise in 1922 of Mussolini and his Blackshirts, thugs who imposed fascist rule on Italy. Even before that, Ortega had the example of the French Revolution when the masses of French citizens rose and massacred aristocrats and clergy and imposed a brutal rule over the nation. That revolution resulted in the elevation of Napoleon Bonaparte, who — as emperor — was essentially Europe’s first total dictator and a predecessor of Franco, Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, and a host of other lesser dictators across the globe.

ORTEGA’S RHETORIC

In *The Revolt of the Masses* Ortega carries a basic message: he fears that the rise of the masses could result in a “tyranny of the majority.” Early twentieth-century American journalists sometimes called it the threat of mob-ocracy. Ortega, in another section of his book, defines the minority as those who are qualified with special training, while the masses are those who are not qualified. Further, he is convinced that unless the masses are led by an intellectual and capable minority there will be disorder and confusion leading to events such as lynchings and violence. As he says, “When the mass acts on its own, it does so only in one way, for it has no other: it lynches. It is not altogether by chance that lynch law comes from America, for America is, in a fashion, the paradise of the masses” ([para. 3](#)).

Ortega condemned violence and rhetoric — saying, “To-day violence is the rhetoric of the period” ([para. 3](#)) — because he felt that the most common means of persuasion of his time was

violence, such as was then being used in Russia and Italy and would soon be used in Germany and Spain. “Rhetoric is the cemetery of human realities,” he continues, implying that people have ceased listening to reason and argument and have given themselves over to a mass movement that listens to nothing but the call for action.

Yet, Ortega’s rhetoric is careful and powerful in its own way. His concern is for us to take a close look at the nature of the state and its powers over us.

Ortega begins his essay with a simple definition: “the mass is that part which does not act of itself” ([para. 1](#)). He goes on to say that the nature of the mass is such that it must be directed by “superior minorities.” This first paragraph explains the implications of these statements, which could easily be misunderstood. The ways in which the minority must be superior are implied; he does not specifically state them. His definition of the mass is simple enough; it is what we once called the “common man.”

Ortega’s method depends on definition and the examination of the elements of that definition. But it also depends on the analysis of examples and a review of some of the historical circumstances that might shed light on his concept of the revolution of the masses. In [paragraph 5](#), he reviews the development of the modern state. European states were small and fragmented in the eighteenth century, while the industrialization of the nineteenth century produced more powerful and more populous states. Ortega specifically points to the emergence in the nineteenth

century of a large middle class with talent and a skill for organization.

Using an extended metaphor ([para. 5](#)), Ortega talks about the “ship of State” and suggests that the metaphor was invented by the bourgeoisie because they felt a new “oceanic” power in the concept of nationhood. In his review of the history of the state, Ortega points to its early limitations in terms of soldiers, bureaucracy, and wealth. However, the revolutions of 1798 in France and 1848 in various European countries came at a time when the population was much larger than it had been in the Middle Ages or the Renaissance. By the mid-nineteenth century, in other words, the middle class had enlarged and the mass of people was vastly larger than at any earlier time.

The relationship between civilization and the state, which is its product, is another issue Ortega examines. His perception is that the mass, feeling it *is* the state, resists the “creative minority” in anything that disturbs the status quo. What Ortega feared most was that the state would overwhelm society — or, as he says, “Then the State gets the upper hand and society has to begin to live for the State” ([para. 14](#)). As an example, he points to the fascist government of Italy and Mussolini’s declaration, “All for the State; nothing outside the State; nothing against the State” ([para. 15](#)). Then, Ortega paradoxically claims that Mussolini achieved his end by using precisely “the ideas and the forces he [was] combating: by liberal democracy.” This is probably the most alarming part of his message.

■ ■ PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Ortega y Gasset's "The Greatest Danger, the State." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

- Who is "the mass" and who is "the minority"?
- What are the dangers Ortega sees arising from the enlarged mass of modern society?
- How does the state threaten society?

From *The Revolt of the Masses*. Authorized translation from the Spanish.

The Greatest Danger, the State

In a right ordering of public affairs, the mass¹ is that part which does not act of itself. Such is its mission. It has come into the world in order to be directed, influenced, represented, organized — even in order to cease being mass, or at least to aspire to this. But it has not come into the world to do all this by itself. It needs to submit its life to a higher court, formed of the superior minorities. The question as to who are these superior individuals may be discussed ad libitum,² but that without them, whoever they be, humanity would cease to preserve its essentials is something about which there can be no possible doubt, though Europe spend a century with its head under its wing, ostrich-fashion, trying if she can to avoid seeing such a plain truth. For we are not dealing with an opinion based on facts more or less frequent and probable, but on a law of social “physics,” much more immovable than the laws of Newton’s physics. The day when a genuine philosophy³ once more holds sway in Europe — it is the one thing that can save her — that day she will once again realize that man, whether he like it or no, is a being forced by his nature to seek some higher authority. If he succeeds in finding it of himself, he is a superior man; if not, he is a mass-man and must receive it from his superiors.

For the mass to claim the right to act of itself is then a rebellion against its own destiny, and because that is what it is doing at present, I speak of the rebellion of the masses. For, after all, the one thing that can substantially and truthfully be called rebellion is

that which consists in not accepting one's own destiny, in rebelling against one's self. The rebellion of the archangel Lucifer would not have been less if, instead of striving to be God — which was not his destiny — he had striven to be the lowest of the angels — equally not his destiny. (If Lucifer had been a Russian, like Tolstoi,⁴ he would perhaps have preferred this latter form of rebellion, none the less against God than the other more famous one.)

When the mass acts on its own, it does so only in one way, for it has no other: it lynches. It is not altogether by chance that lynch law comes from America, for America is, in a fashion, the paradise of the masses.

When the mass acts on its own, it does so only in one way, for it has no other: it lynches. It is not altogether by chance that lynch law comes from America, for America is, in a fashion, the paradise of the masses. And it will cause less surprise, nowadays, when the masses triumph, that violence should triumph and be made the one *ratio*, the one doctrine. It is now some time since I called attention to this advance of violence as a normal condition.⁵ To-day it has reached its full development, and this is a good symptom, because it means that automatically the descent is about to begin. To-day violence is the rhetoric of the period, the empty rhetorician has made it his own. When a reality of human

existence has completed its historic course, has been shipwrecked and lies dead, the waves throw it up on the shores of rhetoric, where the corpse remains for a long time. Rhetoric is the cemetery of human realities, or at any rate a Home for the Aged. The reality itself is survived by its name, which, though only a word, is after all at least a word and preserves something of its magic power.

But though it is not impossible that the prestige of violence as a cynically established rule has entered on its decline, we shall still continue under that rule, though in another form. I refer to the gravest danger now threatening European civilization. Like all other dangers that threaten it, this one is born of civilization itself. More than that, it constitutes one of its glories: it is the State as we know it to-day. We are confronted with a replica of what we said ... about science: the fertility of its principles brings about a fabulous progress, but this inevitably imposes specialization, and specialization threatens to strangle science.

The same thing is happening with the State. Call to mind what the State was at the end of the eighteenth century in all European nations. Quite a small affair! Early capitalism and its industrial organizations, in which the new, rationalized technique triumphs for the first time, had brought a commencement of increase in society. A new social class appeared, greater in numbers and power than the pre-existing: the middle class. This astute middle class possessed one thing, above and before all: talent, practical talent. It knew how to organize and discipline, how to give continuity and consistency to its efforts. In the midst of it, as in an

ocean, the “ship of State” sailed its hazardous course. The ship of State is a metaphor re-invented by the bourgeoisie, which felt itself oceanic, omnipotent, pregnant with storms. That ship was, as we said, a very small affair: it had hardly any soldiers, bureaucrats, or money. It had been built in the Middle Ages by a class of men very different from the bourgeois — the nobles, a class admirable for their courage, their gifts of leadership, their sense of responsibility. Without them the nations of Europe would not now be in existence. But with all those virtues of the heart, the nobles were, and always have been, lacking in virtues of the head. Of limited intelligence, sentimental, instinctive, intuitive — in a word, “irrational.” Hence they were unable to develop any technique, a thing which demands rationalization. They did not invent gunpowder. Incapable of inventing new arms, they allowed the bourgeois, who got it from the East or somewhere else, to utilize gunpowder and automatically to win the battle against the warrior noble, the “caballero,” stupidly covered in iron so that he could hardly move in the fight, and who had never imagined that the eternal secret of warfare consists not so much in the methods of defense as in those of attack, a secret which was to be rediscovered by Napoleon.⁶

As the State is a matter of technique — of public order and administration — the “ancien régime” reaches the end of the seventeenth century with a very weak State, harassed on all sides by a widespread social revolt. The disproportion between State power and social power at this time is such that, comparing the situation then with that of the time of Charlemagne,⁷ the eighteenth-century State appears degenerate. The Carolingian

State was of course much less powerful than the State of Louis XVI,⁸ but, on the other hand, the society surrounding it was entirely lacking in strength.⁹ The enormous disproportion between social strength and the strength of public power made possible the Revolution, the revolutions — up to 1848.

But with the Revolution the middle class took possession of public power and applied their undeniable qualities to the State, and in little more than a generation created a powerful State, which brought revolutions to an end. Since 1848, that is to say, since the beginning of the second generation of bourgeois governments, there have been no genuine revolutions in Europe. Not assuredly because there were no motives for them, but because there were no means. Public power was brought to the level of social power. *Good-bye for ever to Revolutions!* The only thing now possible in Europe is their opposite: the coup d'état.¹⁰ Everything which in following years tried to look like a revolution was only a coup d'état in disguise.

In our days the State has come to be a formidable machine which works in marvelous fashion; of wonderful efficiency by reason of the quantity and precision of its means. Once it is set up in the midst of society, it is enough to touch a button for its enormous levers to start working and exercise their overwhelming power on any portion whatever of the social framework.

The contemporary State is the easiest seen and best-known product of civilization. And it is an interesting revelation when one takes note of the attitude that mass-man adopts before it. He sees

it, admires it, knows that *there it is*, safeguarding his existence; but he is not conscious of the fact that it is a human creation invented by certain men and upheld by certain virtues and fundamental qualities which the men of yesterday had and which may vanish into air tomorrow. Furthermore, the mass-man sees in the State an anonymous power, and feeling himself, like it, anonymous, he believes that the State is something of his own. Suppose that in the public life of a country some difficulty, conflict, or problem presents itself, the mass-man will tend to demand that the State intervene immediately and undertake a solution directly with its immense and unassailable resources.

This is the gravest danger that to-day threatens civilization: State intervention; the absorption of all spontaneous social effort by the State, that is to say, of spontaneous historical action, which in the long run sustains, nourishes, and impels human destinies. When the mass suffers any ill-fortune or simply feels some strong appetite, its great temptation is that permanent, sure possibility of obtaining everything — without effort, struggle, doubt, or risk — merely by touching a button and setting the mighty machine in motion. The mass says to itself, “*L’Etat, c’est moi*,”¹¹ which is a complete mistake. The State is the mass only in the sense in which it can be said of two men that they are identical because neither of them is named John. The contemporary State and the mass coincide only in being anonymous. But the mass-man does in fact believe that he is the State, and he will tend more and more to set its machinery working on whatsoever pretext, to crush beneath it any creative minority which disturbs it — disturbs it in any order of things: in politics, in ideas, in industry.

*Society will have to live for the State,
man for the governmental machine*

The result of this tendency will be fatal. Spontaneous social action will be broken up over and over again by State intervention; no new seed will be able to fructify. Society will have to live *for* the State, man *for* the governmental machine. And as, after all, it is only a machine whose existence and maintenance depend on the vital supports around it, the State, after sucking out the very marrow of society, will be left bloodless, a skeleton, dead with that rusty death of machinery, more gruesome than the death of a living organism.

Such was the lamentable fate of ancient civilization. No doubt the imperial State created by the Julii and the Claudii¹² was an admirable machine, incomparably superior as a mere structure to the old republican State of the patrician families. But, by a curious coincidence, hardly had it reached full development when the social body began to decay.

Already in the times of the Antonines (second century), the State overbears society with its anti-vital supremacy. Society begins to be enslaved, to be unable to live except *in the service of the State*. The whole of life is bureaucratized. What results? The bureaucratization of life brings about its absolute decay in all orders. Wealth diminishes, births are few. Then the State, in order

to attend to its own needs, forces on still more the bureaucratization of human existence. This bureaucratization to the second power is the militarization of society. The State's most urgent need is its apparatus of war, its army. Before all the State is the producer of security (that security, be it remembered, of which the mass-man is born). Hence, above all, an army. The Severi,¹³ of African origin, militarize the world. Vain task! Misery increases, women are every day less fruitful, even soldiers are lacking. After the time of the Severi, the army had to be recruited from foreigners.

Is the paradoxical, tragic process of Statism now realized? Society, that it may live better, creates the State as an instrument. Then the State gets the upper hand and society has to begin to live for the State.¹⁴ But for all that the State is still composed of the members of that society. But soon these do not suffice to support it, and it has to call in foreigners: first Dalmatians, then Germans. These foreigners take possession of the State, and the rest of society, the former populace, has to live as their slaves — slaves of people with whom they have nothing in common. That is what State intervention leads to: the people are converted into fuel to feed the mere machine which is the State. The skeleton eats up the flesh around it. The scaffolding becomes the owner and tenant of the house.

When this is realized, it rather confounds one to hear Mussolini heralding as an astounding discovery just made in Italy, the formula: "All for the State; nothing outside the State; nothing against the State." This alone would suffice to reveal in Fascism a

typical movement of mass-men. Mussolini found a State admirably built up — not by him, but precisely by the ideas and the forces he is combating: by liberal democracy. He confines himself to using it ruthlessly, and, without entering now into a detailed examination of his work, it is indisputable that the results obtained up to the present cannot be compared with those obtained in political and administrative working by the liberal State. If he has succeeded in anything it is so minute, so little visible, so lacking in substance as with difficulty to compensate for the accumulation of the abnormal powers which enable him to make use of that machine to its full extent.

Statism is the higher form taken by violence and direct action when these are set up as standards. Through and by means of the State, the anonymous machine, the masses act for themselves. The nations of Europe have before them a period of great difficulties in their internal life, supremely arduous problems of law, economics, and public order. Can we help feeling that under the rule of the masses the State will endeavor to crush the independence of the individual and the group, and thus definitely spoil the harvest of the future?

A concrete example of this mechanism is found in one of the most alarming phenomena of the last thirty years: the enormous increase in the police force of all countries. The increase of population has inevitably rendered it necessary. However accustomed we may be to it, the terrible paradox should not escape our minds that the population of a great modern city, in order to move about peaceably and attend to its business,

necessarily requires a police force to regulate the circulation. But it is foolishness for the party of “law and order” to imagine that these “forces of public authority” created to preserve order are always going to be content to preserve the order that that party desires. Inevitably they will end by themselves defining and deciding on the order they are going to impose — which, naturally, will be that which suits them best.

It might be well to take advantage of our touching on this matter to observe the different reaction to a public need manifested by different types of society. When, about 1800, the new industry began to create a type of man — the industrial worker — more criminally inclined than traditional types, France hastened to create a numerous police force. Towards 1810 there occurs in England, for the same reasons, an increase in criminality, and the English suddenly realize that they have no police. The Conservatives are in power. What will they do? Will they establish a police force? Nothing of the kind. They prefer to put up with crime, as well as they can. “People are content to let disorder alone, considering it the price they pay for liberty.” “In Paris,” writes John William Ward,¹⁵ “they have an admirable police force, but they pay dear for its advantages. I prefer to see, every three or four years, half a dozen people getting their throats cut in the Ratcliffe Road, than to have to submit to domiciliary visits, to spying, and to all the machinations of Fouché.”¹⁶ Here we have two opposite ideas of the State. The Englishman demands that the State should have limits set to it.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

- ■ 1. To what extent do you agree with Ortega regarding the rise in the number of police in modern industrialized society? In [paragraph 18](#), Ortega contrasts two approaches to the state's dealing with crime and police. Which does your nation choose?
2. What does it mean for the state to get the upper hand and for society then to have to live for the state?
3. Do you agree that the "State's most urgent need is its apparatus of war, its army" ([para. 13](#))?
4. Is your state, as you perceive it, stronger or weaker than your society?

■ ■ SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Ortega claims that when the mass operates on its own it has only one choice: it lynches. What evidence have you in terms of your personal observation or your observation of events via the media, such as unfolded during Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005 or the Los Angeles riots in 1992, when people acted as a mass without leadership? Can you support Ortega's view, or do you find yourself rejecting it?
2. Assuming that Ortega is correct in saying that the mass needs to submit to a superior minority, what kind of minority would that have to be in order for you to be comfortable in such a state? Does Ortega seem to be describing a democratic state when he posits a superior minority? In what ways could a minority be superior? Is there any way to avoid producing a superior minority in society?
3. Is it true that when the mass takes control violence becomes the only truly persuasive force in the state? Have you seen any evidence that would support that view? Examine your perception of the state in terms of the persuasiveness of its message. What persuades you to be a good citizen? To what extent do you feel you serve the state? To what extent do you feel the state serves you? Do you sense that the mass has taken control of the state?

4. Ortega says that people are forced by nature to “seek some higher authority” and that those who find it in themselves are destined to be the superior minority, while those who do not find it are destined to be part of the mass. How reasonable is this view? Is it really clear that people naturally seek a higher authority? Do you think people need a higher authority in their lives? What would be an example of such an authority? How could people find it within themselves?
5. Why is the state the source of the greatest danger? What is Ortega fearful of in this selection? Do you find yourself in agreement with his concern that the state may at times enslave society? Does the state, as an abstract entity, naturally move toward asking us to serve it rather than assuming that it exists to serve us? What are the dangers here, and how can you or your friends minimize the threat?

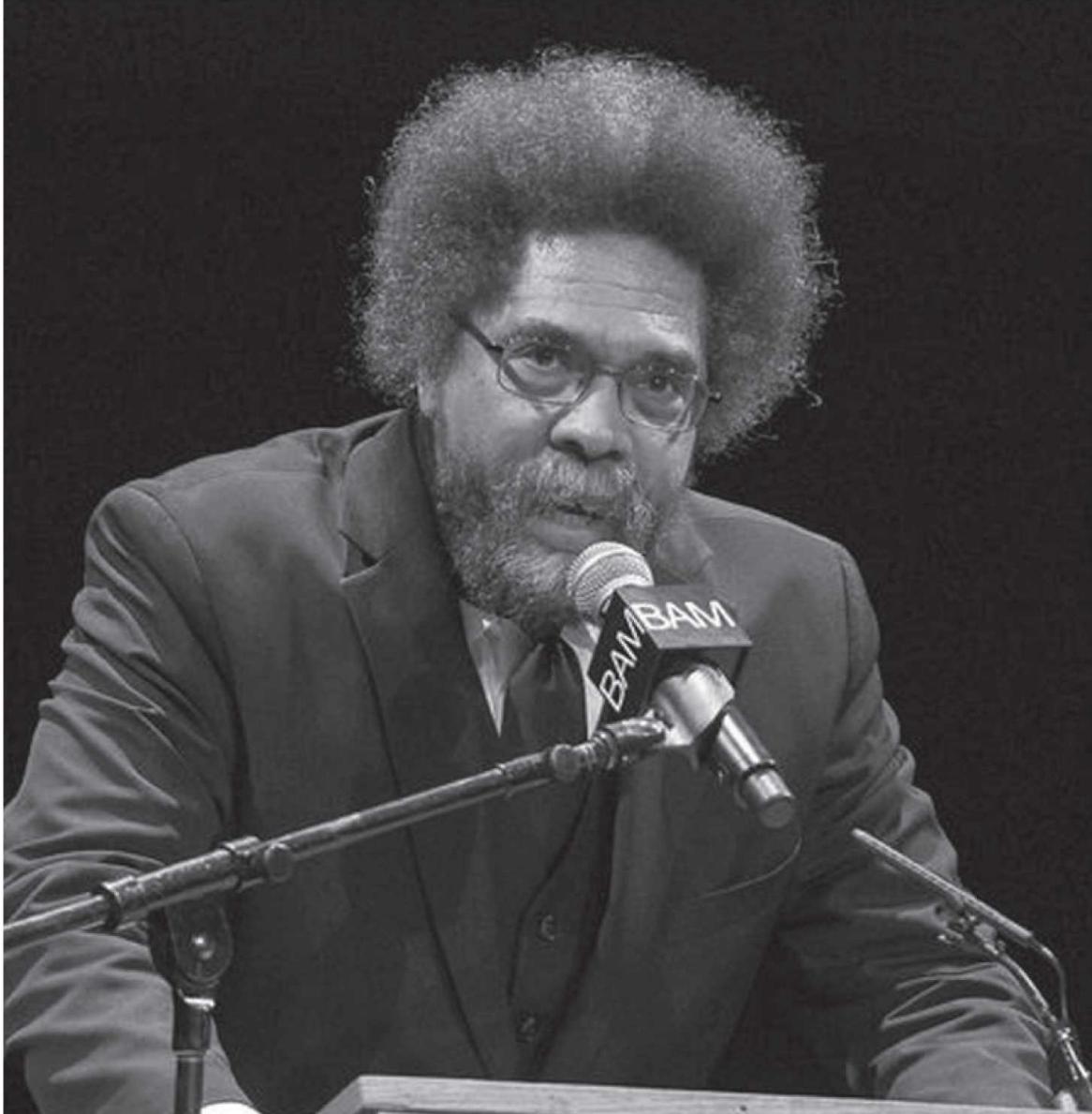
CONNECTIONS

1. Compare Karl Marx’s essay, “[The Communist Manifesto](#)”, with Ortega’s essay. What governing force in Marx’s essay parallels Ortega’s concept of the state? Does Marx pit the bourgeoisie against the proletariat in the same way Ortega pits the superior minority against the mass? In an essay that compares their views, decide whether or not Ortega’s ideas are supported by Marx’s concept of economic power. Is Marx talking about the power of the state or about something else? To what extent, if any, does Ortega’s position on the state take into account economic issues that are echoed in Marx’s essay? How would Ortega’s views change if he were talking primarily about economics?
2. In his essay “[Economic Control and Totalitarianism](#)”, F. A. Hayek talks extensively about the potential power of socialist states. What does Hayek say that might strengthen or weaken Ortega’s argument? Would Ortega be sympathetic to Hayek’s view that a socialist government would create a dominating state? How likely is it that Ortega would support a socialist government? Write an essay that helps clarify the views of each author on how government should work. Which of these authors would favor a strong state and which

would favor a weaker one? How do the ideas of Ortega and Hayek support your conclusion?



Cornel West *The Deep Democratic Tradition in America*



Patrick Cashin/Everett Collection/Alamy Live News/Alamy Stock Photo

CORNEL WEST (b. 1953) is one of America's most prominent intellectuals. Primarily a philosopher, he works on topics from existentialism to Christianity and from politics to popular culture. West's interests and appearances reflect the importance he places on connecting his philosophical work to popular culture: he

frequently appears on talk shows such as Bill Maher and has appeared in the films *The Matrix Reloaded* and *The Matrix Revolutions*. West was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and raised in Sacramento, California. His father was a Baptist minister while his mother was a teacher and principal; the Irene B. West elementary school in Elk Grove, California, is named for her. West graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University with a B.A. in Philosophy. He then studied at Princeton University, where he became the first African American to receive a PhD in Philosophy at Princeton.

West began his career as a fellow at Union Theological Seminary, but soon accepted a professorship at Princeton in 1984, then moved to Harvard in 1994, where he held the position of Alphonse Fletcher Professor of African American Studies. Eventually his teaching responsibilities extended into philosophy and theology as well as African American Studies, reflecting West's broad range of expertise. In 2002 the president of Harvard, Lawrence Summers, became unhappy with West because of his appearances in films and other forms of popular entertainment. Lawrence complained that West's serious scholarly work had fallen off and his current work was not worthy of him, an assessment that West contested. In a very public fashion, West resigned from Harvard and returned to Princeton. His career eventually took him back to Union Theological Seminary, where he served as a professor of Theology and Christian Practice. In 2016 Harvard welcomed him back with an appointment in the African and African American Studies program with a joint appointment at Harvard Divinity School.

In addition to his academic career, West is deeply engaged in the political sphere, appearing frequently on *The Bill Maher Show*, CNN, and *Democracy Now*, among other media outlets. He is also an active political supporter of a number of different democratic candidates and causes, including his support of Bill Bradley's bid for the presidency in 2000 and his support for Bernie Sanders, a fellow democratic socialist, in 2016. He has been a fierce critic of Donald Trump and almost as severe a critic of Barack Obama, whom he criticized for his support of Wall Street financiers and for his pursuit of drone warfare in the Middle East.

Ever since he was president of his high school class, West has demonstrated publicly for his beliefs. He was arrested twice for his protests in Missouri at the death of Michael Brown, an African American who was killed by a white policeman. He has appeared at rallies for a number of social justice causes and has declared himself a radical in his politics. Yet, he also reminds us that his radicalism is rooted in his religious philosophy.

He has edited, coauthored, or authored some twenty books. *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism* (1989) examines the philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Pierce, William James, and John Dewey, all philosophers credited with creating a specifically American school of pragmatic thought: the evaluation of philosophical thought in relation to its value in actual practice. In his later work, including the well respected *Race Matters* (1994) and *Democracy Matters* (2004), West draws connections to these thinkers through his analysis of the foundations of democracy. His most recent book is *Black*

Prophetic Fire (2014), in which he laments the loss of the great African American public philosophers, like W. E. B. Du Bois and others, and looks to the future of black philosophical thought in the United States. West's work also extends beyond the written word; he has also produced three spoken word albums, collaborating with Prince, Jill Scott, Andre 3000, Talib Kweli, and others.

CORNEL WEST'S RHETORIC

Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight against Imperialism (2004), from which this passage comes, addresses the influence of the United States on world politics, especially in the Middle East. West views our modern version of democracy as far from perfect and as deeply influenced by its imperial legacy. He argues that the influence of American corporations and problems of corruption hold democracy back from its full expression and from fully satisfying the needs of the people. West explains that American democracy seems unaware of its hypocrisy in dealing with the Middle East as its economic forces tend toward domination. He points out that Islamic fundamentalism is antagonistic toward the United States in part because of what it perceives as U.S. economic and military imperialism. Ultimately, West feels that there is a historical commitment in the United States to genuine democracy and that this commitment manifests itself most powerfully in the campaign for civil rights as expressed in the non-violent principles of Martin Luther King Jr.

West writes clearly and thinks deeply. His audience is the concerned citizen of any age. He begins by asking a rhetorical

question, “Why vote?” It is a question asked by many young people for the very reason he begins with: the narrow polarization of the nation today has resulted in the feeling that participating in our democracy is futile. But he has profound faith in the deeper strain of American democracy, such as that expressed in the writings of Emerson (1803–1882), whose essays encourage the individual to think for himself or herself. Such a practice might make a difference in the log-jam of contemporary politics.

He considers the conditions of white and black America and the breakdown of “the civic and social structure in the inner cities” ([para. 5](#)), both problems that face modern democracies. He then turns to the rise of religiosity in American politics, ultimately concluding that the religious right represents a “misguided righteousness” ([para. 6](#)). This view, from a theologian, needs to be examined, but it also needs to be respected.

West moves from discussing the failure of contemporary “political discourse” and its effect on numbing us, writing that “We long for a politics that is not about winning a political game but about producing better lives” ([para. 2](#)). He uses this point to critique both political parties, examining the circumstances that affect their positions on political issues and their focus on winning rather than bettering lives. He then moves on to consider the middle class, both white people and those of color, who choose to live in walled communities to avoid the “ugly realities that afflict so many of our people” ([para. 4](#)). He reserves some of his harshest criticism for the religious right, which he says violates “the very ethics of

compassion and ecumenicalism that it professes to live by” ([para. 6](#)).

One of the most important rhetorical approaches in West’s essay is his citation of important literary and artistic figures. He mentions Melville, Mark Twain, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison as figures who represent our deep democratic tradition. But he also mentions modern musicians like John Coltrane and Tupac Shakur, arguing that their music should be considered central to the idea of democracy. He ends the essay by quoting Emerson’s most famous essays: “Self-reliance” and “The American Scholar,” in which the scholar intends to learn the “philosophy of the street” ([para. 14](#)).

One of his final quotes from Emerson is, “Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind” ([para. 13](#)).

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of West’s “The Deep Democratic Tradition in America.” Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. How is American politics damaged by the upper and middle classes’ pursuit of pleasure?
2. What does West see as the result of the religiosity of the religious right?
3. Why are classic American writers and musicians evidence for a deep democratic tradition?

The Deep Democratic Tradition in America

To many, our democratic system seems so broken that they have simply lost faith that their participation could really matter. The politics of self-interest and catering to narrow special interests is so dominant that so many ask themselves, *Why vote?*

This disaffection stems both from the all-too-true reality of the corruptions of our system and from a deeper psychic disillusionment and disappointment. The political discourse is so formulaic, so tailored into poll-driven, focus-group-approved slogans that don't really say anything substantive or strike at the core of our lived experience; the lack of authenticity of discourse — and the underlying lack of gravitas, of penetrating insight and wisdom on the part of politicians — is numbing. But we must keep in mind that the disgust so many feel comes from a deep desire to hear more authentic expressions of insights about our lives and more genuine commitments to improving them. Many of us long for expressions of real concern both about the pain of our individual lives and about the common good — hence the power of Bill Clinton's claim that he felt our pain — as opposed to the blatant catering to base interests and to narrow elite constituencies. We long for a politics that is not about winning a political game but about producing better lives.

The reality of what we get is so far from this that the hope for the kind of authentic voice in our politics that we want to hear has come to seem almost ridiculously naive. And yet, it is the longing

for such honest discourse that was surely behind the passion of the early support for Howard Dean.¹ It was no accident that he so energized younger adults in particular — they tend to be less beaten down by the disillusionments of the system. For this reason the angry anti-Bush rhetoric that Dean had to offer was for a while emotionally satisfying, but it was ultimately too limited. It lacked the substance of deeper insights and a positive democratic vision. Both the Republican “vision” and the Democratic “vision” are deeply problematic. Our national focus has become so dominated by narrow us-versus-them discourse that it has all but drowned out authentic debate over issues. Though many voters are mobilized by the increased polarization of our party politics, there is an underlying disgust about the preoccupation of our political leaders with partisan warfare.

The uninspiring nature of our national political culture has only enhanced the seductiveness of the pursuit of pleasure and of diverting entertainments, and too many of us have turned inward to a disconnected, narrowly circumscribed family and social life. White suburbanites and middle-class blacks (and others) are preoccupied with the daily pursuit of the comfort of their material lives. In many cases they literally wall themselves off into comfortable communities, both physical and social, in which they can safely avert their eyes from the ugly realities that afflict so many of our people. Because they are able to buy the cars and take the vacations they want, they are all too willing to either disregard the political and social dysfunctions afflicting the country or accept facile explanations for them.

The black community is increasingly divided, the upper and middle classes as against the feeble institutions of the inner cities. Too much of the black political leadership has become caught up in the mainstream political game and has been turning away from the deep commitment to a more profound advocacy for poor blacks. Meanwhile a generation of blacks who have suffered from the cataclysmic breakdown of the civic and social structure in the inner cities are consigned to lives of extreme alienation and empty pursuit of short-term gratifications.

The emptiness of our political culture has also driven a surge of civically engaged religiosity in the form of the rise of the religious Right, with its misguided righteousness and its narrow, exclusionary, and punitive perspective on the country's social ills. The impulse to join in this massively energized movement may well come from the desire to rise above the emptiness of what strikes its followers as a depraved culture that has lost its moral rudder, but the movement is violating the very ethics of compassion and ecumenicalism that it professes to live by. So zealous has this movement become that it has turned into a hugely divisive and antidemocratic force in the country.

As we take a hard look at our democracy, therefore, the resurgent imperialism of the Bush² administration must not set the limits of our critique; repudiating the Bush administration is not enough. Turning back to multilateralism, and to tax and social policies that no longer grossly favor the already well-off, are essential missions, but we should take this challenging moment as an opportunity for a deeper soul-searching. Our democracy is

suffering from more serious psychosocial ills. This is where what I call the deep democratic tradition becomes so vital.

The dissonance of being both a person who ardently believes in democratic ideals — how can we not fall in love with them if and when we are exposed to them? — and a wide-eyed realist about the dispiriting truths of everyday life in America can be alternately enraging, numbing, and crushing. But that dissonance has also provoked our most impassioned and profound indictments of America's democratic failures, from Ralph Waldo Emerson's³ championing of the necessity of self-cultivation and his praise of John Brown's⁴ radical abolitionism, to Herman Melville's⁵ darkly tragic portrayal of Ahab's crazed imperialistic nihilism, to Mark Twain's⁶ sly indictment of white supremacy, to James Baldwin's⁷ and Toni Morrison's⁸ profound explorations of the psychic scars of racism, and to Tupac Shakur's⁹ eloquent outrage. The violence-obsessed and greed-driven elements of American culture project themselves out to the world so powerfully — and offensively — that the world has developed a problematic love-hate relationship with America, the ugly extremes of which we are now forced to confront. But legions of Americans have been equally affronted by the perversion of our democratic ideals.

This democratic vigilance has been disproportionately expressed by artists, activists, and intellectuals in American life. They have and can play a unique role in highlighting the possibilities and difficulties of democratic individuality, democratic community, and democratic society in America. They have been the primary agents of our deep democratic tradition. The penetrating visions

and inspiring truth telling of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman,¹⁰ Herman Melville, and Eugene O’Neill,¹¹ of W. E. B. Du Bois,¹² James Baldwin, John Coltrane,¹³ Lorraine Hansberry,¹⁴ and Toni Morrison, exemplify the profound potential of democracy in America.

These are the figures whose ferocious moral vision and fervent democratic commitment have held the feet of the plutocratic and imperial elites to the fire and instilled a sense of purpose to democratic activism on the part of citizens from all colors and classes. They have been the life force behind the deeper individual and civic American commitment to democracy.

The deep democratic tradition did not begin in America and we have no monopoly on its promise. But it is here where the seeds of democracy have taken deepest root and sprouted most robustly. The first grand democratic experiment in Athens was driven by a movement of the demos — citizen-peasants — organizing to make the Greek oligarchs who were abusing their power accountable. Democracy is always a movement of an energized public to make elites responsible — it is at its core and most basic foundation the taking back of one’s powers in the face of the misuse of elite power. In this sense, democracy is more a verb than a noun — it is more a dynamic striving and collective movement than a static order or stationary status quo. Democracy is not just a system of governance, as we tend to think of it, but a cultural way of being. This is where the voices of our great democratic truth tellers come in.

The two paradigmatic figures of the deep democratic tradition in America are Ralph Waldo Emerson and Herman Melville, two democratically charged giants who set in motion distinctive streams of this tradition. And the most Emersonian of American democratic intellectuals is James Baldwin, while the most Melvillean of our democratic intellectuals is Toni Morrison.

“Democracy is not just a system of governance, as we tend to think of it, but a cultural way of being.”

This sentence illustrates how important true (a non-corrupt and people-oriented democracy) democracy is to the United States.

The indisputable godfather of the deep democratic tradition in America is Emerson, a literary artist of dramatic and visionary eloquence and the first full-blown democratic intellectual in the United States. Emerson was an intellectual who hungered most of all to communicate to broad publics. He reveled in the burning social issues of his day (the annihilation of Native Americans, slavery), highlighting the need for democratic individuals to be nonconformist, courageous, and true to themselves. He believed that within the limited framework of freedom in our lives, individuals can and must create their own democratic individuality. He understood that democracy is not only about the workings of the political system but more profoundly about individuals being empowered and enlightened (and suspicious of authorities) in order to help create and sustain a genuine democratic community, a type of society that was unprecedented in human history. And

The existence of democracy is to encourage people to fight for and obtain their own rights and freedoms.

In fact, all this is describing the current America, as if black people are fighting for their skin color, rights, and freedom. They are protecting themselves, and then express to this country what democracy is. What democracy should look like.

he knew that mission required questioning prevailing dogmas as well as our own individual beliefs and biases. A democratic public must continuously create new attitudes, new vocabularies, new outlooks, and new visions — all undergirded by individual commitment to scrutiny and volition. He refused to accept the conventional wisdom of leaders and the narrow pronouncements of experts. In his famous essay “Self-Reliance,” he writes:

Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.

And also:

There is a time in every man’s education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better for worse as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried.

Emerson offered the empowering insight that to be a democratic individual is to be flexible and fluid, revisionary and reformational in one’s dealings with fellow citizens and the world, not adhering to comfortable dogmas or rigid party lines. He posits that the core of being a democrat is to think for one’s self, judge for one’s self, trust one’s self, rely on one’s self, and be serene in one’s own skin — without being self-indulgent, narcissistic, or self-pitying. This was not a standard beyond the enactment of everyday people,

and the concerns of everyday people were the proper focus of democratic inquiry. In “The American Scholar,” Emerson declares:

The literature of the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life, are the topics of the time. It is a great stride. It is a sign — is it not? of new vigor when the extremities are made active, when currents of warm life run into the hands and the feet. I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic; what is doing in Italy or Arabia; what is Greek art, or Provençal minstrelsy; I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low.

■ ■ ■ QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

■ ■ ■ Be sure to practice prereading techniques before a careful, annotated reading.

1. West says that our “democratic system seems so broken” that people have asked themselves “why vote?” What evidence does he present to back up this view? What evidence do you have?
2. How fair is West’s criticism of religion in politics?
3. What does West mean by imperialism? How is imperialism expressed?
4. Why does West recommend that democratic individuals should be non-conformist?
5. According to West, what are our democracy’s problems and how can they be cured?

■ ■ ■ SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. West writes, “Democracy is not just a system of governance, as we tend to think of it, but a cultural way of being.” As a citizen living in a democracy, define what you perceive to be the “cultural way of being” that West describes. How does the democratic system produce a culture of behavior and a cultural attitude distinct enough to set

people apart in their behavior and thinking from those who do not enjoy democracy? What are your general expectations from governance and from society as a member of a democratic nation?

2. West makes a point of telling us that we are currently engaged in “the pursuit of pleasure and of diverting entertainments,” and therefore we are disengaged from the political problems that plague our democracy. Offer an analysis of American society as you understand it and qualify his judgments. In what ways does the pursuit of pleasure in our society disengage us from our problems? Is American society as materialistic as West suggests? And if so, how does materialism affect society’s attitude toward democracy as it exists in our time? How does the pursuit of pleasure hamper our ability to change our political system to make it more democratic?
3. One of West’s most important strategies is to refer to major American writers such as Emerson, Melville, Twain, and Morrison to bolster his critique of current democracy in America. Choose a piece of writing from one of those writers (or another major American writer of your choice) in which they discuss American democracy and demonstrate to what extent their work supports West’s views.
4. One surprising detail in West’s discussion is his suggestion that the work of John Coltrane and Tupac Shakur, both modern musicians with a wide popular audience, supports his position through their criticism of the culture. If you know the work of Tupac, examine his music and his lyrics and explain to someone who may not know him how his work supports West’s argument. Why might contemporary politicians feel that it is inappropriate to cite Tupac as a critic of our culture? What other major musical figures are considered cultural critics? Is their criticism effective? Is it fair?
5. In [paragraph 6](#) West writes that the rise of the religious right is a response to a “culture that has lost its moral rudder.” What does it mean to say our culture has lost its moral rudder — and do you believe that this statement is true? Is it also true that some kind of moral decline has been a major factor in the rise of the religious right? How would you define the moral views that the religious right

supports? Do you agree with West's essential critique of the religious right? Why or why not?

CONNECTIONS

1. One of the nineteenth-century American figures West does not mention is Andrew Carnegie. Examine his essay, "[The Gospel of Wealth](#)", and write an essay that compares the vision of democracy that each essay describes. West is a theologian and strongly interested in the way religion supports or subverts democracy. Carnegie is also deeply religious and even titles his essay a "Gospel," as if it had religious authority. After comparing these two visions of democracy, consider if the religious right is more likely to approve of the essay by West or the essay by Carnegie and explain your answer with examples from each text.
2. Choose an essay from [Part Five on Ethics](#) and use its primary points to establish what ethical concerns West raises in his essay. Is his critique of political parties essentially ethical? Is his critique of religion as it takes a role in contemporary politics also based on ethical principles? What are the ethical issues both essays discuss in common? How different are their views?
3. The idea of empire is central to West. How does his essay conceive of empire? Compare West's concept to that of [Frantz Fanon](#). What do their concepts of empire have in common? Where do they diverge?



Benazir Bhutto *Islam and Democracy*



Rick Friedman/Corbis Historical/Getty Images

BENAZIR BHUTTO (1953–2007) was the first female prime minister of Pakistan and thus the first female leader of an Islamic country. She was educated at Harvard University and Oxford University, where much of her academic attention was focused on political science. Her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1928–1979), was prime minister of Pakistan, but after an unfair trial he was hanged

on charges of murdering a political dissident. He was denied clemency by the dictator General Zia-ul-Haq (1924–1988), who also imprisoned Benazir Bhutto for more than six years in primitive conditions. She was eventually released in 1984 for medical reasons and permitted to travel out of the country.

In 1986, she returned to Pakistan after her younger brother was poisoned. Upon her return, she was met by some one million people and became active in the Pakistan People's Party, which she had founded in 1982. She was elected prime minister in 1988 and held that office until 1990, when she was accused of corruption and replaced. She was elected again in 1993, however, and held the office until 1996. Both of her terms in office were filled with many struggles. She promoted socialist capitalism, fought against regulation, and dealt with numerous struggles within Pakistan as well as with Pakistan's neighbor India. She was in voluntary exile in Dubai in 1998 when Pakistan acquired nuclear armaments to match those of India. Her enemies then accused her of corruption again and sentenced her to three years' imprisonment. However, she maintained her influence with the Pakistan People's Party while she was abroad, and the party declared her its leader in 2002.

She returned to Pakistan in 2007 and was greeted by crowds, but her entourage was quickly attacked by a suicide bomber who killed 136 people. She survived because she had been traveling in an armored vehicle and ducked at the last moment. President Pervez Musharraf (b. 1943), who had granted Bhutto amnesty so that she could return to the country, declared a state of

emergency and had Bhutto held for a time under house arrest. But in December 2007, with the Pakistan People's Party far ahead in the upcoming 2008 elections, Bhutto appeared at a major rally for the party and was shot by an assassin who, after shooting her, detonated a bomb that killed almost two dozen bystanders.

For most of her time in public service (and while in detention and exile), Bhutto represented a powerful voice for democracy in Pakistan. She had a large and enthusiastic following. Her most formidable opponents were fundamentalist extremists, including those who, after several tries, ultimately succeeded in silencing her.

BHUTTO'S RHETORIC

Bhutto wrote much of her book *Reconciliation* only a few months before she was assassinated and during periods of intense political activity and hopefulness for democracy in Pakistan. Yet her writing does not show signs of haste or anxiety. She begins with a review of Islamic religion and its receptiveness to democratic values. She indirectly cites Islam's religious book, the Koran, by pointing to the fact that "Muslims believe in the sovereignty of God" ([para. 1](#)) but then goes on to point out the responsibilities of humankind on earth to respect the "immutable principles of justice, truth, and equality" ([para. 1](#)). In other words, the principles of Islam lead people to create a "just society on earth on which they will be judged in the hereafter" ([para. 2](#)).

Knowing, of course, that terrorists had threatened violence for years and indeed had even attacked her, she insists that such actions are irreligious: “They must not sin by taking innocent life, for God alone has the right to give and take life” ([para. 2](#)). Thus, terrorists pervert their religion when they kill. Interestingly, Bhutto twice mentions that it is a sin to take innocent life, leaving one to wonder about whether the death of others — those who are far from innocent — can be justified. A fatwa, a religious edict often invoked for the purpose of killing someone, was leveled against her, but she says that such an edict will not protect an assassin on the day of judgment. However, she does not explain the right of a religious leader to issue a fatwa or how it is permitted by Islam.

Bhutto first establishes the principles of her religion and its implementation in secular life and then offers a remarkable piece of testimony to bolster her view that democracy and Islam are compatible: she quotes the preamble of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan, much of which was written by her father and passed unanimously by Pakistan’s Parliament. Some of the basic issues are also covered by the U.S. Constitution, but Pakistan’s Constitution also includes concerns and issues that do not appear in the U.S. version. Still, the document’s design is used to try to convince us that her original premise, her thesis, is sound.

Bhutto makes a clear distinction between the spiritual agenda of Islam and the political agenda of those who are angry at the West; as she says, “[r]eligion is being exploited” ([para. 8](#)) by those who become terrorists. She spends some time dealing with the term *secularism*, which she says is a “rhetorical trap” ([para. 7](#)) for

Muslims. For someone from the West, secularism means a separation from religious issues. But for Muslims that is a nonissue. Their issues are freedom, equal-opportunity education for both sexes, and independence of the judiciary. She uses an interesting rhetorical question, “Who can doubt” ([para. 8](#)), when she asserts that Islam has been distorted. Of course, there is much doubt, and a careful analysis of the situation will either remove doubt or reinforce it, depending on circumstances.

Bhutto reviews much current history, including the Russian expedition in Afghanistan and the rise of the mujahideen — the warriors who fought and defeated the Russians and who continue to fight Western influences in Afghanistan. *Mujahideen* literally means “those who wage jihad,” or religious war. She fears that extremists may direct themselves toward disabling Pakistan and taking over its nuclear facilities. In speaking of the nuclear capacity of Pakistan, Bhutto says that the Koran promotes education and “encourages knowledge and scientific experimentation” ([para. 16](#)).

In the second part of her discussion, she lays out an argument that suggests that the West has somehow made it difficult, if not impossible, for Pakistan and other Muslim countries to fulfill their goal to become democratic. Because the West has colonized countries such as Pakistan and India, it has supported dictators who have made a point of giving the West access to oil and other important resources. While encouraging civil rights in countries where the West has no immediate interests or needs, it tolerates despotism and the deprivation of rights in countries whose

resources it needs. This, she says, “has been a major impediment to the growth of democracy in Islamic nations” ([para. 21](#)).

She hopes to prove her argument by using the testimony of President George W. Bush ([para. 26](#)) supporting “America’s belief in human dignity” while at the same time supporting “Pakistan’s military dictator, General Musharraf” ([para. 27](#)). She follows this with more testimony from an article in the *New York Times Magazine* ([para. 28](#)).

Finally, she concludes with evidence from Freedom House’s surveys of the level of freedom enjoyed in nations around the world. Freedom House is credentialed by Bhutto’s reference to its founders, Eleanor Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie, a Democrat and a Republican who worked together for the common good in an effort to be as politically unbiased as possible. The statistics she reveals are not as encouraging as we might wish, and the difference between Arab and non-Arab Muslims is significant, although she does not explain why such a difference should exist.

Her point, finally, is that the West is somewhat responsible for the lack of democracy in Muslim countries. The religion of Islam is not the root of the problem; however, the exploitation of religion by extremists remains a very significant and ongoing problem. Indeed, Benazir Bhutto paid with her life for the principles she believed in: democracy and equality.



PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Benazir Bhutto's "Islam and Democracy." Keeping them in mind during your first reading should help focus your attention.

1. Why do some people assume democracy will not work in Islamic countries?
2. Why does Bhutto feel democracy and Islam are compatible?
3. What does Bhutto say about the role of the West in supporting democracy in Islamic countries?

From *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy, and the West*.

Islam and Democracy

Some people assert that democracy will not work in an Islamic country because Muslims believe in the sovereignty of God and thus cannot accept man's law. God is Master of the Universe, of the known and unknown. Humans share two relationships: one with God and one with one another. They are custodians of God's trust, the earth, which has been placed in their care, as they are created by God. God has sent his principles to humans through thousands of Prophets, including Moses, Abraham, Jesus, and Mohammad (who is the last messenger), to instruct us how we should conduct our lives and the principles by which we should conduct our societies. The immutable principles of justice, truth, and equality must not be transgressed if we are to gain entrance to everlasting life in Paradise.

Thus humans must seek and apply knowledge, must use reason, must consult and build a consensus for a just society on earth on which they will be judged in the hereafter. They must not sin by taking innocent life, for God alone has the right to give and take life. Anyone who interferes in God's work by taking a life commits the most heinous crime in Islam.

The terrorists who attacked me with two bomb blasts on October 19, 2007, when I returned to Pakistan to a historic reception, committed the most heinous crime of murder by taking the lives of 179 innocent people. So too does anyone who attacks innocent

people, whether in the World Trade Center, the tubes in London, or the resorts of Bali, Indonesia.

I am told that the terrorists who made the bombs and conspired to kill me took a *fatwa*, or religious edict, to sanctify the terrorist attacks. However, on the Day of Judgment, such an edict will be of no help. God has ordained that each individual will have to account individually for his actions without intercession from any other individual.

Under the Constitution of Pakistan, authored by my father and passed unanimously by Pakistan's Parliament in 1973, the democratic right to Muslim governance is recognized. The Constitution of 1973 states, in its preamble:

Whereas sovereignty over the entire Universe belongs to Almighty Allah alone, and the authority to be exercised by the people of Pakistan within the limits prescribed by Him is a sacred trust;

And whereas it is the will of the people of Pakistan to establish an order:

Wherein the State shall exercise its powers and authority through the chosen representatives of the people;

Wherein the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance, and social justice, as enunciated by Islam, shall be fully observed;

Wherein the Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective spheres in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and Sunnah;¹

Wherein adequate provision shall be made for the minorities freely to profess and practice their religions and develop their cultures;

Wherein the territories now included in or in accession with Pakistan and such other territories as may hereafter be included in or accede to Pakistan shall form a Federation wherein the units will be autonomous with such boundaries and limitations on their powers and authority as may be prescribed;

Therein shall be guaranteed fundamental rights, including equality of status, of opportunity and before law, social, economic, and political justice, and freedom of thought, expression, belief; faith, worship, and association, subject to law and public morality;

Wherein adequate provision shall be made to safeguard the legitimate interests of minorities and backward and depressed classes;

Wherein the independence of the judiciary shall be fully secured;

Wherein the integrity of the territories of the Federation, its independence and all its rights, including its sovereign rights on land, sea, and air, shall be safeguarded;

So that the people of Pakistan may prosper and attain their rightful and honored place amongst the nations of the World and make their full contribution towards international peace and progress and happiness of humanity:

Now, therefore, we, the people of Pakistan,

Cognisant of our responsibility before Almighty Allah and men;

Cognisant of the sacrifices made by the people in the cause of Pakistan;

Faithful to the declaration made by the Founder of Pakistan, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah,² that Pakistan would be a democratic State based on Islamic principles of social justice;

Dedicated to the preservation of democracy achieved by the unremitting struggle of the people against oppression and tyranny;

Inspired by the resolve to protect our national and political unity and solidarity by creating an egalitarian society through a new order;

Do hereby, through our representatives in the National Assembly, adopt, enact, and give to ourselves, this Constitution.

Thus we can see that there is a perfect constitutional template for democratic governance in the Muslim world. But the current poor relations between much of the West and much of the Islamic world may suggest the need for new terminology if we are to realize the vision. The word *secular*, used to denote separation of state and religion in the Western world, often means “atheism,” or rejection of God, when translated into other languages, including into Urdu in Pakistan.

Instead of using terms that fall into the rhetorical trap set by extremists to discredit the elements of modern democratic society, we should rather stress elements such as freedom to travel, freedom to work, opportunity for

education for both sexes, the independence of the judiciary, and a robust civil society.

Instead of terms such as *secularism*, the director of the Study of Muslim Civilizations at the Aga Khan University in London, Dr. Abdou Filali-Ansary,³ believes that we should refer directly to the individual building blocks of democracy — free elections, an independent judiciary, respect for women’s and minority rights, the rule of law, and fundamental freedoms — to describe the true meaning of a democratic society. We shouldn’t be talking secularism, which to Muslims is a clouded, misleading, and sometimes contentious term. Instead of using terms that fall into the rhetorical trap set by extremists to discredit the elements of modern democratic society, we should rather stress elements such as freedom to travel, freedom to work, opportunity for education for both sexes, the independence of the judiciary, and a robust civil society. These issues, more than the term *secularism*, connote the compatibility of Islam and democratic values.

Who can doubt that Islam — as a religion and as a value structure — has been distorted and manipulated for political reasons by militants and extremists and dictators. The establishment of the Afghan mujahideen by Zia⁴ in the 1980s is an example. (After all, the jihad in Afghanistan aimed to rid the country of Soviet occupation, not reject modernity, technology, and pluralism, and to establish “strategic depth” in Pakistan. That was a political agenda

of Zia.) Islam is now being used for purely political purposes by a group of people who are angry with the West. Religion is being exploited and manipulated for a political agenda, not a spiritual agenda.

The militants seethe with anger, but their anger is always tied to their political agenda. First, they were angry that the West had abandoned three million Afghan refugees and stopped all assistance to them after the Soviets left Afghanistan. Second, they are angry that their offer to the government of Pakistan to send one hundred “battle-hardened mujahideen” to help in the Kashmir uprising of 1989 was rejected. Third, they wanted King Fahd⁵ of Saudi Arabia to turn to their “battle-hardened mujahideen” to protect Saudi Arabia after Iraqi president Saddam Hussein⁶ invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990. He refused. Fourth, they went off to fight in Bosnia when the region was engulfed in war (from 1993 to 1996 I lobbied President Bill Clinton, Prime Minister John Major, and other European leaders to intervene to bring the conflict to an end). Fifth, they tried to exploit the Chechen nationalist movement. Sixth, with the fall of my government, they turned their attention to Kashmir and tried to take over the nationalist Kashmiri movement from 1997 onward.

Muslim extremists systematically targeted historical nationalist movements to gain credibility and launch themselves into the Muslim heartland with a view to piggybacking off nationalist movements to advance their agenda. However, most Muslims were suspicious and not welcoming of their extreme interpretation of Islam. Thus it was only in Afghanistan, already softened by

years of resistance by Afghan mujahideen, that Muslim extremists were able to establish the Taliban dictatorship.

Driven out of Afghanistan after the September 2001 attacks on the United States, they returned to Pakistan, where the journey had begun with General Zia-ul-Haq in 1980.

After the United States invaded Iraq, these same extremists turned their attention to that country. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi⁷ went off to fight in Iraq. Presumably others did, too. Again they used religious propaganda to kill, maim, and effectively divide one of the richest Muslim countries, Iraq, into a land of carnage and bloodshed. Sunnis and Shias, who had lived peacefully side by side for centuries, began to kill each other, and Iraq began to fall apart. It is quite easy (and typical) for Muslim extremists to blame the Americans for the sectarian civil war that rages in Iraq today, when actually it is a long-standing tension between Muslim communities that has been exacerbated and militarized to create the chaos under which extremists thrive.

Iraq is not the only goal of the extremists. Pakistan too is in great danger. Pro-Taliban forces have taken over the tribal areas of Pakistan. They occupy the Swat Valley. They have been ceded Waziristan by the Musharraf⁸ regime. They are moving into the settled areas of Pakistan. Their apparent next goal is the cities of my country, including our capital, Islamabad. They thrive on dictatorship; they thrive on terror; they provoke chaos to exploit chaos.

I returned to Pakistan on October 18, 2007, with the goal of moving my country from dictatorship to democracy. I hoped that this transition could take place during the scheduled elections of 2008. I feared that otherwise the extremists would march toward Islamabad. Islamabad is near the town of Kahuta, where Pakistan's nuclear program is being carried out.

It is my fear that unless extremism is eliminated, the people of Pakistan could find themselves in a contrived conflict deliberately triggered by the militants (or other "Islamists") who now threaten to take over Pakistan's nuclear assets. Having a large Muslim nation fall into chaos would be dangerous; having the only nuclear-armed Muslim nation fall into chaos would be catastrophic. My people could end up being bombed, their homes destroyed, and their children orphaned simply because a dictator has focused all his attention and all of the nation's resources on containing democrats instead of containing extremists, and then has used the crisis that he has created to justify those same policies that caused the crisis. It may sound convoluted, but there is certainly method to the madness.

This is such a tragedy, especially because Islam is clearly not only tolerant of other religions and cultures but internally tolerant of dissent. Allah tells us over and over again, through the Quran, that he created people of different views and perspectives to see the world in different ways and that diversity is good. It is natural and part of God's plan. The Quran's message is open to and tolerant of women's full participation in society, it encourages knowledge

and scientific experimentation, and it prohibits violence against innocents and suicide, despite terrorists' claims to the contrary.

Not only is Islam compatible with democracy, but the message of the Quran empowers the people with rights (democracy), demanding consultation between rulers and ruled (parliament), and requiring that leaders serve the interests of the people or be replaced by them (accountability).

Islam was sent as a message of liberation. The challenge for modern-day Muslims is to rescue this message from the fanatics, the bigots, and the forces of dictatorship. It is to give Muslims back the freedom God ordained for humankind to live in peace, in justice, in equality, in a system that is answerable to the people on this earth accepting that it is God who will judge us on the Day of Judgment.

It is by accepting that temporal and spiritual accountability are two separate issues that we can provide peace, tranquillity, and opportunity. There are two judgments: the judgment of God's creatures in this world through a democratic system and the judgment by God when we leave this world. The extremists and militants who seek to hijack Islam aim to make their own judgments. In their failure lies the future of all Muslims and the reconciliation of Islam and the West.

Islam and Democracy: History and Practice

Conventional wisdom would have us believe that democracy has failed to develop in the Muslim world because of Islam itself.

According to this theory, somehow Islam and democracy are mutually exclusive because Islam is rooted in an authoritarianism that promotes dictatorship. I reject this thinking as convenient and simplistic, grounded in neither theology nor experience. As a Muslim who has lived under both democracy and dictatorship, I know that the reasons are far more complex.

The so-called incompatibility of Islam and democratic governance is used to divert attention from the sad history of Western political intervention in the Muslim world, which has been a major impediment to the growth of democracy in Islamic nations.

Allah tells us over and over again, through the Quran, that he created people of different views and perspectives to see the world in different ways and that diversity is good.

The actions of the West in the second half of the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century often deliberately blocked any reasonable chance for democratic development in Muslim-majority countries. It is so discouraging to me that the actions of the West in the pursuit of its various short-term strategic goals have been counterproductive, often backfiring. Western policies have often preserved authoritarianism and contained the growth of nascent democratic movements in the developing world, specifically in the Islamic world. Western nations' efforts to disrupt

democratic tides — initially for economic reasons and then for political ones — have fueled and exacerbated tensions between the West and Islam.

Despite often grand rhetoric to the contrary, there has been little real Western support for indigenous democratic movements. Indeed, too often there has been outright support for dictatorships. Both during the Cold War and now in the current battle with international terrorism, the shadow between Western rhetoric and Western actions has sowed the seeds of Muslim public disillusionment and cynicism. The double standards have fueled extremism and fanaticism. It accounts, at least in part, for the precipitous drop in respect for the West in the Muslim world. This trend is true even in pro-Western Muslim countries such as Turkey. When I was growing up, I thought of Western nations as inspirations for freedom and development. I still do, but I'm afraid I'm in a shrinking minority of Muslims.

There is an abundance of other examples that manifest the inconsistency of Western support for democracy in the Muslim world: specifically, Western actions that undermined democratic institutions, democratic movements, and democratically elected governments in countries that the West considered critical to other policy objectives. The countries range from large to small, from very important to relatively insignificant. What is remarkable is the clear pattern of Western action: perceived pragmatic self-interest trumping the values of democracy, almost without exception. In a nation that is not relatively strategically important, such as Burma, the West will enforce its democratic creed quite enthusiastically,

organizing trade embargoes and other forms of political isolation. But in places that are viewed as strategically important for economic or geopolitical factors, the West's commitment to democracy can often be more platitude than policy.

I raise this as not just a strategic inconsistency but a true moral dilemma for the West, especially the United States. On one level the West speaks of democracy almost in the context of the values of religion, using rhetoric about liberty being a "God-given" right. And Western nations often take that standard abroad, preaching democratic values like missionaries preaching religion. The problem arises, of course, in its selective application to bilateral foreign policy relationships. I have always believed, and have publicly argued, that the selective application of morality is inherently immoral.

If dictatorship is bad, then dictators are bad — not just dictators who are impotent and irrelevant but also those who are powerful allies in fighting common enemies. The West makes human rights the centerpiece of its foreign policy selectively. The West also stands four-square with struggling democracies selectively. In his second inaugural address, President George W. Bush said:

We will encourage reform in other governments by making clear that success in our relations will require the decent treatment of their own people. America's belief in human dignity will guide our policies, yet rights must be more than the grudging concessions of dictators; they are secured by free dissent and the participation of the governed. In the long run, there is no justice without freedom, and there can be no human rights without human liberty.

President Bush's words notwithstanding, Washington supported Pakistan's military dictator, General Musharraf, whom it considered a key ally in the war against terrorism, even as it simultaneously supported democracy in neighboring Afghanistan and in Iraq in the Middle East.

I am not the only one, of course, who has pointed to strategic and moral inconsistencies in the application of Western political values abroad. Recently Noah Feldman wrote in the *New York Times Magazine* that “a republic that supports democratization selectively is another matter. President Bush's recent speech to the United Nations, in which he assailed seven repressive regimes, was worthy of applause — but it also opened the door to the fair criticism that he was silent about the dozens of places where the United States colludes with dictators of varying degrees of nastiness.” Feldman specifically cites my homeland of Pakistan as one example but goes on to criticize American support for Hosni Mubarak⁹ of Egypt as Mubarak cracks down on the press and other political parties. Feldman adds that “Saudi Arabia — one [of the United States'] most powerful and durable allies — hasn't moved beyond the largely symbolic local council elections that it held two years ago.” The United States, berating Burma and Iran for their undemocratic brutality, has had little to say about U.S. allies. Again, the selective application of morality is criticized as immoral in many nations whose people are also striving for democracy.

There is a clear relationship between dictatorship and religious fanaticism that cannot be ignored. Carl Gershman,¹⁰ the president

of the National Endowment for Democracy, has referred to it as a relationship between autocrats and the Islamists. To the extent that international support for tyrannies within Islamic states has resulted in the hostility of the people of these countries to the West — and cynicism about the West's true commitment to democracy and human rights — some might say that the West has unintentionally created its own Frankenstein monster.

I cannot dispute that there have been few sustained democracies in the Islamic world. But the responsibility does not lie in the text of the Muslim Holy Book. It is a responsibility shared by two significant elements that have come together in the context of environmental conditions inhospitable to the establishment, nurturing, and maintenance of democratic institutions in Muslim-majority societies.

The first element — the battle within Islam — is the purportedly theological fight among factions of Islam that also often seeks raw political and economic power at the expense of the people. The second element — the responsibility of the West — includes a long colonial period that drained developing countries of both natural and human resources. During this time the West showed a cold indifference toward supporting democracy among Muslim states and leaders for reasons that were either economic (oil) or political (anticommunism).

We cannot minimize the fault line that has existed within Muslim nations, a fault line of internal factionalism, disrespect for minority rights, and interventionist and often dysfunctional military

institutions. These elements have often been accompanied by the presence of authoritarian political leadership. There is obviously a shared responsibility for democracy's weakness in Muslim-majority states, but there can be no disputing the fact that democratic governance in Muslim countries lags far behind that in most other parts of the world.

A useful context for the history of democracy within Muslim countries is provided by a brief review of current categorizations of political rights and civil liberties around the world. It will then be possible to objectively compare the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds on standards and criteria of democratic development. Central to this analysis is something that I have always believed and strongly endorse: that freedom and liberty are universal values that can be applied across cultures, societies, religions, ethnic groups, and individual national experiences. Democracy is not an inherently Western political value; it is a universal value. Liberty means as much to someone from Indonesia as it does to someone from Louisiana.

Freedom House (which was founded at the beginning of World War II by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie,¹¹ the Republican candidate whom her husband had just defeated for the presidency) is an international nongovernmental organization (NGO) dedicated to promoting democracy, human rights, and freedom around the world. Each year it engages scholars from around the world to categorize governments on a scale of political rights ranging from "totally free" to "not free." This useful analytical tool is based on analyses of electoral processes, political

pluralism and participation, and how the government functions. Countries are scored on a numerical scale that ranges from one to seven, with the highest number representing the lowest level of freedom. This number is then used to determine one of three ratings: free, partly free, or not free. In some cases, additional variables are used to supplement the data. For example, for traditional monarchies international scholars are additionally asked if the system provides for genuine, meaningful consultation with the people, encourages public discussion of policy choices, and permits petitioning the ruler.

The analysis is especially useful in evaluating political systems in predominantly Muslim monarchies, because it integrates the elements of legitimate secular government with the citizen consultation enshrined in the Quran. The disparities in Freedom House ratings between the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds are dramatic and statistically significant, but not particularly surprising. It is important to remember, of course, that Muslim nations are very different from Western nations in national experience. Specifically, Islamic law generally has a role in government, whether in secular Islamic states such as Kazakhstan or religiously ideological countries such as the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Of the forty-five predominantly Muslim states, only Indonesia, Mali, and Senegal are considered free. Eighteen Muslim nations are considered partly free: Afghanistan, Albania, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Comoros, Djibouti, Gambia, Jordan, Kuwait,

Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Sierra Leone, Turkey, and Yemen.

Twenty-four predominantly Muslim nations are labeled not free: Azerbaijan, Brunei, Egypt, Palestine, Guinea, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Libya, Maldives, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Western Sahara.

The mean score for political rights (on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being the highest level of rights) in the Muslim world is 5.24, compared to 2.82 for the non-Muslim world. The mean score for civil liberties in Muslim countries is 4.78, compared to 2.71 for non-Muslim countries. These are significant differences. I believe that these differences are not the result of theology but rather a product of both Western manipulation and internal Muslim politicization of Islam.

One frequently overlooked detail in the analysis of Freedom House scores is the difference between Arab and non-Arab Muslim-majority countries. In "An 'Arab' More than 'Muslim' Electoral Gap," Alfred Stephan and Graeme Robertson use two different indices of levels of political rights to compare these two types of Muslim-majority countries. The study contrasts the scores of countries in the Freedom House study and also in the Polity IV Indexes relative to GDP from 1972 to 2000, when the competitiveness of an election was questioned. (The Polity IV Project codes and compiles information on the regulation and competitiveness of political participation.)

The authors differentiate between “underachievers” and “over-achievers” in electoral competitiveness, defined by such criteria as whether the government was selected by reasonably fair elections and whether the democratically elected government actually wields political power.

Stephan and Robertson found that a non-Arab Muslim-majority country was astoundingly “almost 20 times more likely to be ‘electorally competitive’ than an Arab Muslim-majority country.” Of the forty-seven Muslim-majority countries that they studied, the Arab Muslim countries formed “the largest single readily identifiable group among all those states that ‘underachieve,’ ” but the world’s thirty-one Muslim-majority non-Arab countries form the largest bloc that “greatly overachieves” in electoral competitiveness. In studying the thirty-eight countries in the world that suffer from extreme poverty, they found “no comparative Muslim gap whatsoever when it comes to political rights.” Their findings suggest that the success of democracy within certain states has less to do with whether a country has a Muslim majority than was previously thought by Western analysts. The result shatters the hypothesis that religion is a key variable related to democracy and that Islam and democracy are inconsistent. It relegates the Islam-democracy incompatibility theory to the level of mythology.

Democracies do not spring up fully developed overnight, nor is there necessarily a bright line between democratic governance and autocracy. More typical, democracy can be seen on a continuum. Civil society and democratic institutions such as

political parties and NGOs tend to develop slowly over time, one critical step at a time.

True democracy is defined not only by elections but by the democratic governance that should follow. The most critical elements of democratic governance go beyond just free and fair elections to the protection of political rights for those in political opposition, the open function of a civil society and free press, and an independent judiciary. Far too often in the developing world — including the Islamic developing world — elections are viewed as zero-sum games. The electoral process is democratic, but that's where democracy ends. What follows is tantamount to one-party authoritarian rule. This is the opposite of true democratic governance, which is predicated on shared constitutional power and responsibility. And because democratic governance rests on a continuum of experience, the length of that experience is directly related to the sustainability of democratic governance itself. In other words, the longer democratic governance is maintained, the stronger the democratic system becomes.

Democracies do not spring up fully developed overnight, nor is there necessarily a bright line between democratic governance and autocracy.... True democracy is defined not only by

elections but by the democratic governance that should follow.

A democracy that is more than two hundred years old is not in serious danger of interruption or of suspension of constitutional norms. It has a two-century-old firewall of democratic history and practice to protect itself from extraconstitutional abuse of power. A nation without such a long history of democracy and democratic institutions — political parties; a popularly elected, legitimate, sovereign parliament; NGOs; free media; and an independent judiciary — is vulnerable to the suspension of the democratic order. We must think of a new democracy like a seedling that must be nourished, watered, fed, and given time to develop into a mighty tree. Thus, when democratic experiments are prematurely interrupted or disrupted, the effects can be, if not permanent, certainly long lasting. Internal or external interruptions of democracy (both elections and governance) can have effects that ripple and linger over generations.

We must be realistic and pragmatic about democracy. John F. Kennedy once referred to himself as an “idealist without illusions.” To me this is a useful description as I think in particular of my country moving from the brutality of dictatorship to the civility of democracy. When confronted with tyranny, one is tempted to go to the barricades directly, when pragmatism would dictate exhausting other potential (and peaceful) remedies. As I have grown in maturity and experience, I remain as strongly committed to the

cause but more patient in finding means to achieve goals peacefully.

The colonial experience of many Muslim countries had contributed to their difficulties in sustaining democracy. In the absence of adequate support and without the time and commitment needed to build a democratic infrastructure, they failed to strengthen their electoral and governing processes. Many of the countries discussed in this chapter were exposed to democratic values, democratic ideals, and the gradual development of political and social institutions while under colonial rule or shortly thereafter. However, their nascent democratic seeds were often smothered by the strategic interests of Western powers (often working with elements within their own societies) before they flowered into viable democratic systems.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. How effective is Bhutto's use of examples? Which example is most powerful?
2. How does Bhutto see the relationship between the spiritual and the worldly obligations of Muslims?
3. When Bhutto says it is a sin to take innocent life, do you think she implies that taking a life that is not innocent is somehow acceptable?
4. What seem to be some of the basic religious beliefs that Bhutto credits as Islamic in the early part of her essay? How different are they from the beliefs of other religions?
5. What does the suggestion that the Koran promotes diversity have to do with the possibility of Islam's supporting democracies?

6. Why would people today feel that Islam might not support a democratic government?
7. How convincing is Bhutto in this selection? Besides the Koran, what other sources does she use to bolster her argument?

■ ■ SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

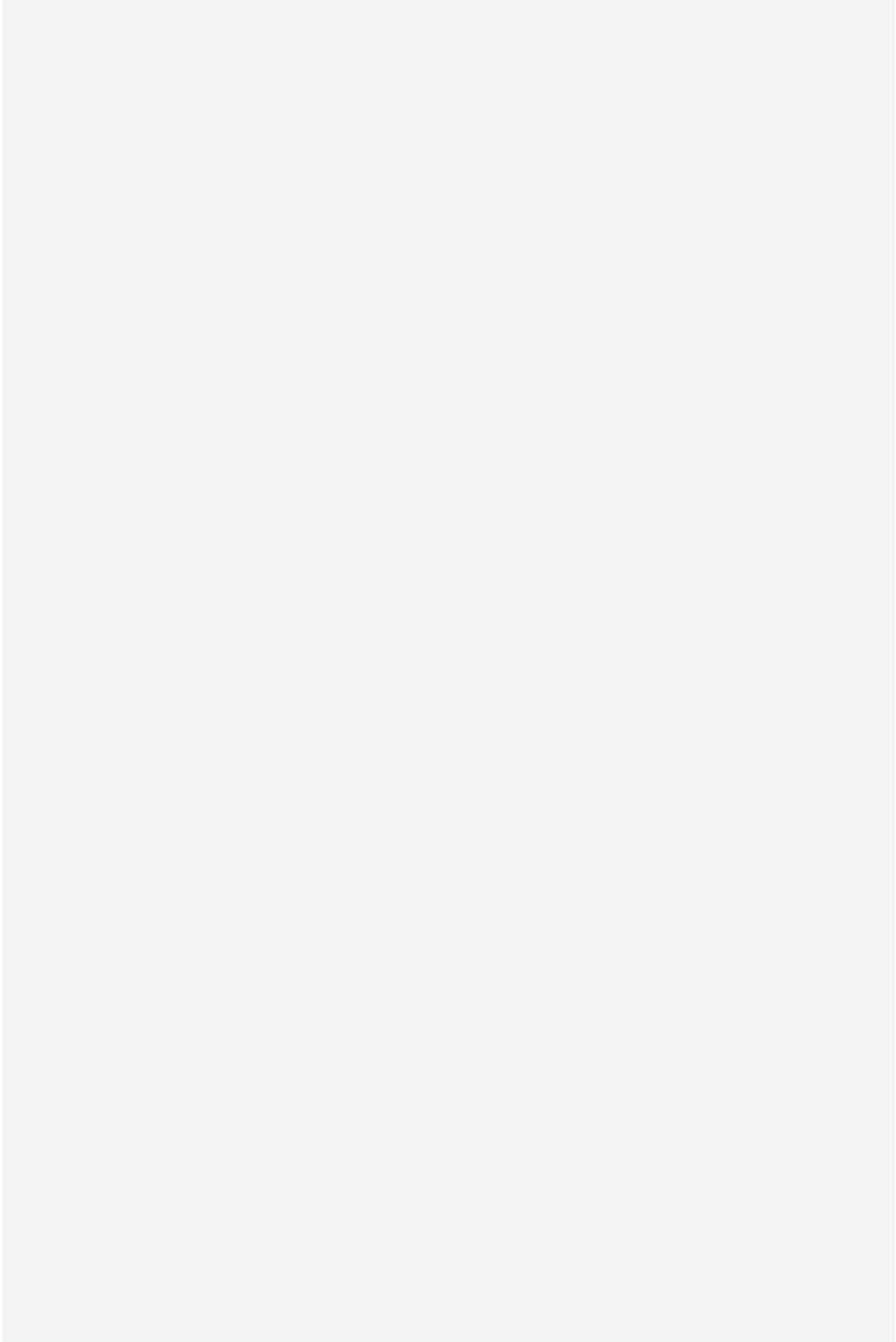
1. In [paragraph 15](#), Bhutto raises the question of extremists getting control of Pakistan's nuclear plants and their nuclear weapons. How serious is this possibility? How worried does she seem about this possibility? How worried are you? What should be done if there is such a threat, and who should respond to the threat?
2. In [paragraph 29](#), Bhutto says that "the West has unintentionally created its own Frankenstein monster." What does she mean by this statement? Examine her position in the paragraphs before and after this comment (which she has often used in speeches). How well has she supported her argument? What methods has she used to support the argument? Do you feel that she is correct, or are you not convinced?
3. Bhutto says that dictators who are favored by the West help extremists, especially by uniting them in their dislike of the United States. How do dictators help the causes of extremists in Muslim countries? Bhutto talks a good deal about Afghanistan and the Taliban. Research the current situation in Afghanistan and its history since the Russian invasion. Then decide whether or not Afghanistan is a good example for Bhutto to use in her complaint that the West must bear a share of the responsibility for the presence of dictators in Muslim countries.
4. What are the realistic choices for West countries in their dealings with nations such as Saudi Arabia, which has a great deal of oil but little support for civil rights? Until 2018 women, for instance, could not drive cars. There are no elections for a president or prime minister nor for a parliament. In Egypt, Hosni Mubarak ruled with an iron grip and denied thousands of people their civil rights, but he guaranteed

the security of Israel and kept the Suez Canal open for international trade and military shipping. Should the West demand that such nations become democratic and respect human civil rights? If they don't follow through, what should, and what can, Western countries do?

5. Read the Koran for evidence to support Bhutto's claim that the Muslim holy book supports diversity, equality of men and women, civil rights, and a democratic approach to government. Argue a case in favor of Bhutto's position or against it. Use testimony from the Koran to bolster your argument.

CONNECTIONS

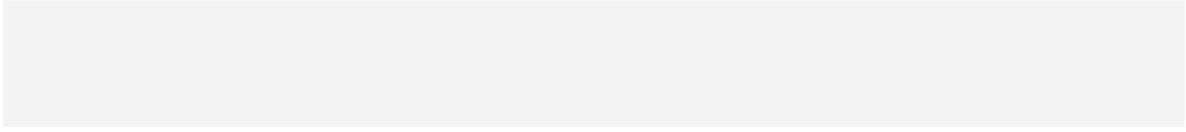
1. Compare the preamble of Pakistan's Constitution with the Constitution of the United States. On what issues do the two documents agree? What seem to be the primary differences between these constitutions? What issues are included in Pakistan's Constitution that are not present in the U.S. Constitution? What is important in the U.S. Constitution that is either omitted from or of lesser importance in the Pakistan Constitution? Does the excerpt from Pakistan's Constitution convince you that its intention is to produce a democratic government?
2. In [paragraph 7](#), Benazir Bhutto states that the term *secularism* is a problem for Muslims. Her argument is that the religion of Islam is not an impediment to democracy. [Cornel West](#) makes distinct references to religion in government. They do, however, comment on the question of freedom, which Bhutto makes a point to emphasize. West, like Bhutto, discusses the problems with colonialism. Write an essay that explains the common ground that Bhutto has with West. To what extent is it possible to imagine a separation of church and state in Bhutto's commentary? Why is the separation of church and state important in a democracy? How much common ground do Bhutto and West have in their disapproval of colonialism and empire building?



Reflections on the Nature of Government

Now that you have read the selections in “Government,” consider how these writers have helped inform your views of the role of government in your life.

1. How do these writers help you define what government is?
2. What do these writers say is your own role in government?
3. Where do you think the source of power is in your government?
4. Have these essays made you feel more or less confident in the future of your government?
5. How have your ideas on the sanctity of property been affected by these essays?
6. What is the difference between *good* government and *bad* government?
7. Some writers say that the best government is the least government. How do you react to this idea? How little government would you tolerate?
8. How serious is the conflict between individual rights and community rights in today’s government?
9. How do you feel about the future of religion in a modern democracy?
10. Which author made the most difference in helping clarify your views of government?



Part Two CULTURE

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

SIGMUND FREUD

CARL JUNG

VIRGINIA WOOLF

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

FRANTZ FANON

BARBARA EHRENREICH

Introduction

Be good, be kind, be humane, and charitable. Love your fellows, console the afflicted, pardon those who have done you wrong.

—ZOROASTER

America is woven of many strands. I would recognize them and let it so remain. Our fate is become one, and yet many. This is not prophecy but description.

—RALPH ELLISON (1913–1994)

Class, race, sexuality, gender, and all other categories by which we categorize and dismiss each other need to be excavated from the inside.

—DOROTHY ALLISON (B. 1949)

Male and female citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, must be equally admitted to all honors, positions, and public employment according to their capacity and without other distinctions besides those of their virtues and talents.

—OLYMPE DE GOUGES (1748–1793)

The highest possible stage in moral culture is when we recognize that we ought to control our thoughts.

—CHARLES DARWIN (1809–1882)

Let us be grateful to people who make us happy. They are the charming gardeners who make our souls.

—MARCEL PROUST (1871–1922)

I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with pain.

—JAMES BALDWIN (1924–1987)

It is a sure sign that a culture has reached a dead end when it is no longer intrigued by its myths.

—GREIL MARCUS (B. 1945)

The question of human culture is embedded in the question of human values. Our modern Western culture in the Western world is changing in so many ways that it is difficult to understand the implications of changes as they are happening. The values that our grandparents held are often quite different from those we hold today. While our concern for equality and fairness remain constant despite the many changes we face in each generation, how we conceive of these concepts is shaped by those around us and by our systems of knowledge. In the United States today, our culture does not accept slavery or slave wages, both of which were accepted as norms in certain parts of the nation less than fifty years ago. As culture changes, we change with it; certain ideas become more significant, while others are deemed obsolete. Our culture surrounds us, encompassing both our external world and how we conceive of our internal one. The readings in this chapter cover many aspects of cultures both past and present — from how we conceive of our own minds to how we come to terms with, and challenge, our roles in society.

At the beginning of the twentieth century in psychology, our culture first began to consider the idea of a subconscious mind. The subconscious is accepted as a fact by most people today, but in the 1920s such an idea was a novelty. Sigmund Freud took the idea in one direction, examining the effects of childhood experiences on the adult psyche, while Carl Jung took the idea in

another direction, hypothesizing a general cultural unconscious that was not just that of an individual, but shared by the entire culture. While others have challenged the scientific basis of these thinkers' views, their ways of conceiving of the self and the mind still influence our culture today. In her famous essay on the imaginary sister of William Shakespeare, Virginia Woolf considers another aspect of our culture as she articulates views on gender equality and gender issues that still resonate with contemporary concerns.

Frederick Douglass's and Martin Luther King Jr.'s calls for a more equal society also still resonate today. Douglass's arguments against the institution of slavery are foundational to the struggle for racial equality in the United States, while Martin Luther King Jr.'s arguments in favor of racial justice have become a contemporary moral touchstone. Because King was a minister, he articulated his position not only in terms of politics, but also morality and religion. He preached the religion of equality and justice and has made those values a central aspiration of our culture. His complex views of nonviolence and protest have also influenced activist movements worldwide. On the other hand, Frantz Fanon, a French West Indian psychologist, encourages a different response to political oppression, encouraging violence in the struggle for colonial liberation. The teachings of Douglass, King, and Fanon have all been interpreted in different ways, but their calls for equality extend from their own cultural context to still influence us today. Another site of great cultural change over the course of the twentieth century is class. The middle class, the concept of which grew as a cultural reality beginning in the 1920s

after World War I, then suffered a collapse during the Great Depression of the 1930s. However, after the end of World War II in 1945, the middle class bloomed, a trend that has begun to reverse in the last several decades due to rising inequality. Recent cultural conversations about the threat of its demise have been raised by many, including the journalist Barbara Ehrenreich, whose writing about her own work experience puts the threat into a personal perspective. Her work clearly examines our current anxiety over the ways in which economic realities affect our cultural outlook.

Justice and equality, major values of our culture, are linked to the concept of freedom in Frederick Douglass's (1818–1895) *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. According to federal and state laws in the early nineteenth century that protected slavery in the South, Douglass was doomed to remain enslaved until his death, unless his owner freed him or allowed him to purchase his freedom. In recording the circumstances of his life under a government that enforced slave laws — in both the North and the South — at the same time that it advocated for democracy, Douglass illustrates how deeply the institution of slavery warped the democratic ideals of a young country and the deep damage it inflicted on everyone involved.

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), a cultural icon of the twentieth century, introduced the idea of psychoanalysis to a wide audience. One of the best-known results of Freud's study of dreams is his conclusion that all people suffer from an Oedipus complex when they are extremely young. Freud explains that Oedipus, thinking

he was escaping his fate, killed his father and married his mother, both of whom were strangers to him. Freud takes this familiar Greek myth and explores its significance in the lives of very young children, showing that it is common for them to wish to do away with their parent of the same sex and have their opposite sex parent all to themselves. As people grow older, both the memory and the desire to follow through on this feeling are repressed and forgotten. They become part of our unconscious and, in some cases, may resurface in the form of guilt. As adults, we know that such feelings are completely unacceptable, and the guilt that results can create psychological illness.

Carl Jung (1875–1961) began his studies with Freud's views of the content of the unconscious, but one of his analyses led him in a novel direction. He concluded that some of the content of the unconscious mind could not have begun in the conscious mind because it was not the product of the individual's conscious experience. Jung reasoned that certain images present in the unconscious were common to all members of a culture. He called these images *archetypal* because they seemed fundamental and universal, such as the archetype of the father and archetype of the mother. He then hypothesized that part of the mind's content is derived from cultural history. Unlike Freud, Jung saw the unconscious as containing images that represent deep instinctual longings belonging to an entire culture, not just to the individual.

In 1929, the novelist and essayist Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) considered the question of how gifted women could hope to achieve important works if the current and historical patterns of

oppression were to continue. Her essay “A Room of One’s Own” was addressed originally to a group of women studying at Cambridge in the two colleges reserved for them at the time. Woolf regarded these women appropriately as gifted, but she worried for their future because their opportunities in postwar England were quite limited. In a stroke of brilliance, Woolf demonstrates the pattern that oppresses gifted women by imagining for William Shakespeare an equally gifted sister named Judith and then tracing her probable development in sixteenth-century England. What chance would Judith have had to be a world-famous figure like her brother? Woolf’s discussion is so lifelike and so well realized that it stands as a classic of modern literature and of the feminist movement.

While Martin Luther King Jr. put himself on the line for his commitment to nonviolence in dealing with cultural injustice, Frantz Fanon (1925–1961), in *Violence and Decolonization*, put himself on the line on the side of violence in fighting for Algerian independence. Fanon was a soldier in World War II and saw action in Algeria. He was himself born in Martinique, a French colony in the Caribbean, when he joined the Free French Army. His work as a psychiatrist after the war took him back to Algeria during the Algerian war of independence. It was during this war that he developed the idea that decolonization could only be accomplished through violence. His theory, influenced by Freud and Jung’s psychoanalytic concepts of the self, has had a powerful effect on modern culture, not only in decolonization movements in Africa and the Middle East but also in the United

States in the ideas of the Black Panthers and a variety of other groups.

“Letter from Birmingham Jail” was written by Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968), while he sat in a cell after a protest against segregation in everyday life in Mississippi. But although the protest was against the state laws that prohibited the intermingling of blacks and whites in public venues in the South, informal segregation existed in most of the rest of the nation. By the middle of the twentieth century when King was writing, the changes that Frederick Douglass had thought were coming had been slow to arrive. King addresses his fellow clergy, the people who, despite the Christian values they were expected to uphold, hoped King would modify his demands. Their values had not kept up with his. The clergy prayed for change, but slow change. King knew that meant little change, particularly in the prejudices held against African Americans. The important achievement of Martin Luther King Jr., was to help Americans change their values and create a culture of acceptance and understanding.

The idea of the middle class is another cultural touchstone of our times. Barbara Ehrenreich (b. 1941) in her “Is the Middle Class Doomed?” relies on data in the form of numbers provided by government sources as well as on the testimony of numerous economists and sociologists who track the economic health of the country. Francis Fukuyama, in a related essay “[Why Did Democracy Spread?](#)”, claims that democracy itself may depend on a vigorous middle class. Ehrenreich’s views center more on the effects on individuals struggling to make a living than she does on

the overall politics of the diminishing middle class. She makes a strong case built on evidence that points to a profound possibility that the middle class, as a cultural and economic group, may disappear.

All these writers have affected the ways in which we think about ourselves. Our cultural values of freedom, equality, fairness, justice, and the pursuit of happiness are all at stake in the works of these writers. We still live with the ideas of Freud and Jung, which influence popular literature, films, and music. While they are frequently challenged, their ideas are embedded in our culture. While Virginia Woolf took a long view of the opportunities available to women in her own day, she made it clear that it is not talent that limited women, but the prevailing cultural views of the age. Frantz Fanon argued for violence as a result of his personal experience on the battlefield and in the mental health centers of the war in Algeria. His views have been misinterpreted by some, but they have shaped the fortunes of many countries that underwent decolonization. Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King Jr. both risked their lives to change laws that did not protect the weakest, but instead the strongest among us. Cultural values are in flux in all ages, but in our time, as in the past, changes in values meet resistance, especially from the established people and power structures in society. The writers in this section remind us how change happens and why.

Some Considerations about the Nature of Culture

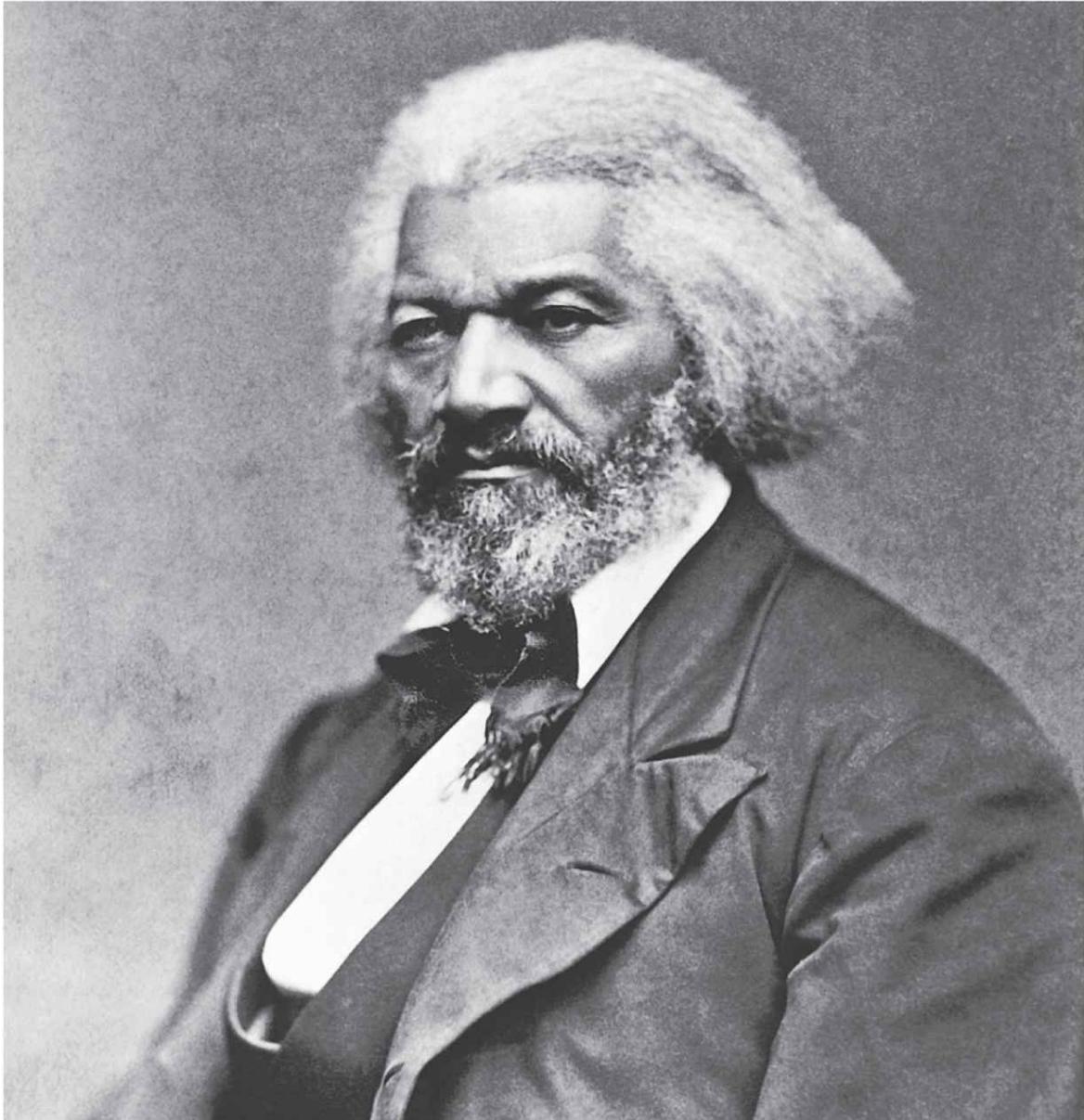
Before reading the selections that follow, consider your views of culture. Reflect on the following questions and write out your responses. Discuss

your answers with your classmates.

1. To what extent do you agree that culture involves the question of human values?
2. How important is fairness to our sense of appropriate values in society?
3. How do theorists like Freud, Jung, and Fanon shape our cultural values?
4. What are the virtues of a political position of violence versus nonviolence?
5. How does our culture treat differences among peoples?
6. Why do cultural values about sex, gender, or ethnicity change?
7. Which cultural values have changed in an evolutionary way?
8. Which cultural values have changed abruptly?
9. Which current economic decisions offend your cultural values?
10. Which cultural values do you hold that are not held by older members of your family?



Frederick Douglass From *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*



FPG/The Image Bank/Getty Images

FREDERICK DOUGLASS (1817–1895) was born into slavery in Maryland; he died not only a free man but also a man who commanded the respect of his country, his government, and hosts

of supporters. Ironically, it was his owner's wife, Mrs. Hugh Auld, a Northerner, who helped Douglass learn to read and write. Until her husband forcefully convinced her that teaching slaves was "unlawful, as well as unsafe," Mrs. Auld taught Douglass enough so that he could begin his own education — and escape to freedom. Mrs. Auld eventually surpassed her husband in her vehement opposition to having Douglass read, leading Douglass to conclude that slavery had a negative effect on slave and slaveholder alike: both suffered the consequences of a political system that was inherently immoral.

The *Narrative* is filled with examples of the injustice of slavery. Douglass had little connection with his family. Separated from his mother, Harriet Bailey, Douglass never knew who his father was. In his *Narrative*, he records the beatings he witnessed as a slave, the conditions under which he lived, and the struggles he felt within himself to be a free man. Douglass himself survived brutal beatings and torture by a professional slave "breaker."

The laws of the time codified the injustices that Douglass and all American slaves suffered. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 tightened the hold on all slaves who had gone north in search of freedom. Federal marshals were enjoined to return slaves to their owners. The Underground Railroad helped so many runaway slaves find their way to Canada that a second Fugitive Slave Act was enacted in 1850 with stiff penalties for those who did not obey the law. In retaliation, many northern states enacted personal freedom laws to counter the Fugitive Slave Act. Eventually, these laws became central to the South's decision to secede. However,

Douglass's fate, when he eventually escaped in 1838 by impersonating an African American seaman (using his papers to board ship), was not secure. Abolitionists in New York helped him find work in shipyards in New Bedford, Massachusetts. He changed his name from Auld to Douglass to protect himself, and he began his career as an orator in 1841 at an antislavery meeting in Nantucket.

To avoid capture after publication of an early version of his autobiography, Douglass spent two years on a speaking tour of Great Britain and Ireland (1845–1847). He then returned to the United States, bought his freedom, and rose to national fame as the founder and editor of the *North Star*, an abolitionist paper published in Rochester, New York. One of his chief concerns was for the welfare of the slaves who had managed to secure their freedom. When the Civil War began, there were no plans to free the slaves, but Douglass managed to convince President Lincoln that it would further the war effort to free them; in 1863, the president delivered the Emancipation Proclamation.

However, the years after the war and Lincoln's death were not good for freed slaves. Terrorist groups in both the North and the South worked to keep them from enjoying freedom, and training programs for former slaves that might have been effective were never fully instituted. During this time, Douglass worked in various capacities for the government — as assistant secretary of the Santo Domingo Commission, as an official in Washington, D.C., and as U.S. minister to Haiti (1889–1891). He was the first African

American to become a national figure and to have influence with the government.

DOUGLASS'S RHETORIC

Douglass was basically self-taught, but he knew enough to read the powerful writers of his day. He was a commanding speaker in an age in which eloquence was valued and speakers were rewarded handsomely. This excerpt from the *Narrative* — [Chapters 6, 7, and 8](#) — is notable for its clear and direct style. The use of the first-person narrative is as simple as one could wish, yet the feelings projected are sincere and moving.

Douglass's structure is the chronological narrative, relating events in the order in which they occurred. He begins his story at the point of meeting a new mistress, a woman from whom he expected harsh treatment. Because she was new to the concept of slavery, however, she behaved in ways that were unusual, and Douglass remarks on her initially kind attitude. Douglass does not interrupt himself with flashbacks or leaps forward in time but tells the story as it happened. At critical moments, he slows the narrative to describe people or incidents in unusual detail and lets the reader infer from these details the extent of the injustice he suffered.

By today's standards, Douglass's style may seem formal. His sentences are often longer than those of modern writers, although they are always carefully balanced and punctuated by briefer sentences. Despite his long paragraphs, heavy with example and

description, after a century and a half his work remains immediate and moving. No modern reader will have difficulty responding to what Frederick Douglass has to say. His views on education are as accessible and as powerful now as when they were written.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of the excerpt that follows from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What were the ethical issues involved in Mrs. Auld's helping Douglass learn to read?
2. In what ways was Douglass treated immorally? Was he immoral in his behavior toward others?
3. What was the ethical position of slave owners toward their slaves? Why did they think of themselves as ethical in their behavior?

First published 1845; revised 1892.

*From Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass,
an American Slave*

My new mistress proved to be all she appeared when I first met her at the door, — a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings. She had never had a slave under her control previously to myself, and prior to her marriage she had been dependent upon her own industry for a living. She was by trade a weaver; and by constant application to her business, she had been in a good degree preserved from the blighting and dehumanizing effects of slavery. I was utterly astonished at her goodness. I scarcely knew how to behave towards her. She was entirely unlike any other white woman I had ever seen. I could not approach her as I was accustomed to approach other white ladies. My early instruction was all out of place. The crouching servility, usually so acceptable a quality in a slave, did not answer when manifested toward her. Her favor was not gained by it; she seemed to be disturbed by it. She did not deem it impudent or unmannerly for a slave to look her in the face. The meanest slave was put fully at ease in her presence, and none left without feeling better for having seen her. Her face was made of heavenly smiles, and her voice of tranquil music.

But, alas! this kind heart had but a short time to remain such. The fatal poison of irresponsible power was already in her hands, and soon commenced its infernal work. That cheerful eye, under the influence of slavery, soon became red with rage; that voice, made

all of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon.

Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, C. After I had learned this, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. To use his own words, further, he said, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell.¹ A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master — to do as he is told to do. Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world. Now," said he, "if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy." These words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought. It was a new and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things, with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in vain. I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty — to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. It was just what I wanted, and I got it at a time when I the least expected it. Whilst I was saddened by the thought of losing the aid of my kind

mistress, I was gladdened by the invaluable instruction which, by the merest accident, I had gained from my master. Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read. The very decided manner with which he spoke, and strove to impress his wife with the evil consequences of giving me instruction, served to convince me that he was deeply sensible of the truths he was uttering. It gave me the best assurance that I might rely with the utmost confidence on the results which, he said, would flow from teaching me to read. What he most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved, that I most hated. That which to him was a great evil, to be carefully shunned, was to me a great good, to be diligently sought; and the argument which he so warmly urged, against my learning to read, only served to inspire me with a desire and determination to learn. In learning to read, I owe almost as much to the bitter opposition of my master, as to the kindly aid of my mistress. I acknowledge the benefit of both.

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I had resided but a short time in Baltimore before I observed a marked difference, in the treatment of slaves, from that which I had witnessed in the country. A city slave is almost a freeman, compared with a slave on the plantation. He is much better fed and clothed, and enjoys privileges altogether unknown to the slave on the plantation. There is a vestige of decency, a sense of shame, that does much to curb and check those outbreaks of atrocious cruelty so commonly enacted upon the plantation. He is a desperate slaveholder, who will shock the humanity of his nonslaveholding neighbors with the cries of his lacerated slave. Few are willing to incur the odium attaching to the reputation of being a cruel master; and above all things, they would not be known as not giving a slave enough to eat. Every city slaveholder is anxious to have it known of him, that he feeds his slaves well; and it is due to them to say, that most of them do give their slaves enough to eat. There are, however, some painful exceptions to this rule. Directly opposite to us, on Philpot Street, lived Mr. Thomas Hamilton. He owned two slaves. Their names were Henrietta and Mary. Henrietta was about twenty-two years of age, Mary was about fourteen; and of all the mangled and emaciated creatures I ever looked upon, these two were the most so. His heart must be harder than stone, that could look upon these unmoved. The head, neck, and shoulders of Mary were literally cut to pieces. I have frequently felt her head, and found it nearly covered with festering sores, caused by the lash of her cruel mistress. I do not know that her master ever whipped her, but I have been an eyewitness to the cruelty of Mrs. Hamilton. I used to be in Mr. Hamilton's house nearly every day. Mrs. Hamilton used to sit in a large chair in the middle of the room, with a heavy

cowskin always by her side, and scarce an hour passed during the day but was marked by the blood of one of these slaves. The girls seldom passed her without her saying, "Move faster, you *black gip!*" at the same time giving them a blow with the cowskin over the head or shoulders, often drawing the blood. She would then say, "Take that, you *black gip!*" — continuing, "If you don't move faster, I'll move you!" Added to the cruel lashings to which these slaves were subjected, they were kept nearly half-starved. They seldom knew what it was to eat a full meal. I have seen Mary contending with the pigs for the offal thrown into the street. So much was Mary kicked and cut to pieces, that she was oftener called "*pecked*" than by her name.

I lived in Master Hugh's family about seven years. During this time, I succeeded in learning to read and write. In accomplishing this, I was compelled to resort to various stratagems. I had no regular teacher. My mistress, who had kindly commenced to instruct me, had, in compliance with the advice and direction of her husband, not only ceased to instruct, but had set her face against my being instructed by any one else. It is due, however, to my mistress to say of her, that she did not adopt this course of treatment immediately. She at first lacked the depravity indispensable to shutting me up in mental darkness. It was at least necessary for her to have some training in the exercise of irresponsible power, to make her equal to the task of treating me as though I were a brute.

My mistress was, as I have said, a kind and tender-hearted woman; and in the simplicity of her soul she commenced, when I

first went to live with her, to treat me as she supposed one human being ought to treat another. In entering upon the duties of a slave-holder, she did not seem to perceive that I sustained to her the relation of a mere chattel, and that for her to treat me as a human being was not only wrong, but dangerously so. Slavery proved as injurious to her as it did to me. When I went there, she was a pious, warm, and tender-hearted woman. There was no sorrow or suffering for which she had not a tear. She had bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked, and comfort for every mourner that came within her reach. Slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of these heavenly qualities. Under its influence, the tender heart became stone, and the lamblike disposition gave way to one of tiger-like fierceness. The first step in her downward course was in her ceasing to instruct me. She now commenced to practice her husband's precepts. She finally became even more violent in her opposition than her husband himself. She was not satisfied with simply doing as well as he had commanded; she seemed anxious to do better. Nothing seemed to make her more angry than to see me with a newspaper. She seemed to think that here lay the danger. I have had her rush at me with a face made all up of fury, and snatch from me a newspaper, in a manner that fully revealed her apprehension. She was an apt woman; and a little experience soon demonstrated, to her satisfaction, that education and slavery were incompatible with each other.

From this time I was most narrowly watched. If I was in a separate room any considerable length of time, I was sure to be suspected of having a book, and was at once called to give an account of

myself. All this, however, was too late. The first step had been taken. Mistress, in teaching me the alphabet, had given me the *inch*, and no precaution could prevent me from taking the *ell*.

The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was sent to errands, I always took my book with me, and by going one part of my errand quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my return. I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge. I am strongly tempted to give the names of two or three of those little boys, as a testimonial of the gratitude and affection I bear them; but prudence forbids; — not that it would injure me, but it might embarrass them; for it is almost an unpardonable offense to teach slaves to read in this Christian country. It is enough to say of the dear little fellows, that they lived on Philpot Street, very near Durgin and Bailey's shipyard. I used to talk this matter of slavery over with them. I would sometimes say to them, I wished I could be as free as they would be when they got to be men. "You will be free as soon as you are twenty-one, *but I am a slave for life!* Have not I as good a right to be free as you have?" These words used to trouble them; they would express for me the liveliest sympathy, and console me

with the hope that something would occur by which I might be free.

I was now about twelve years old, and the thought of being a *slave for life* began to bear heavily upon my heart. Just about this time, I got hold of a book entitled “The Columbian Orator.” Every opportunity I got, I used to read this book. Among much of other interesting matter, I found in it a dialogue between a master and his slave. The slave was represented as having run away from his master three times. The dialogue represented the conversation which took place between them, when the slave was retaken the third time. In this dialogue, the whole argument in behalf of slavery was brought forward by the master, all of which was disposed of by the slave. The slave was made to say some very smart as well as impressive things in reply to his master — things which had the desired though unexpected effect; for the conversation resulted in the voluntary emancipation of the slave on the part of the master.

The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery; but while they relieved me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than the one of which I was relieved. The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers.

In the same book, I met with one of Sheridan's² mighty speeches on and in behalf of Catholic emancipation. These were choice documents to me. I read them over and over again with unabated interest. They gave tongue to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed through my mind, and died away for want of utterance. The moral which I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder. What I got from Sheridan was a bold denunciation of slavery, and a powerful vindication of human rights. The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery; but while they relieved me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than the one of which I was relieved. The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery. I loathed them as being the meanest as well as the most wicked of men. As I read and contemplated the subject, behold! that very discontentment which Master Hugh had predicted would follow my learning to read had already come, to torment and sting my soul to unutterable anguish. As I writhed under it, I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out. In moments of agony, I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity. I have often wished myself a beast. I

preferred the condition of the meanest reptile to my own. Any thing, no matter what, to get rid of thinking! It was this everlasting thinking of my condition that tormented me. There was no getting rid of it. It was pressed upon me by every object within sight or hearing, animate or inanimate. The silver trump of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness. Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever. It was heard in every sound, and seen in every thing. It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition. I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it. It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.

I often found myself regretting my own existence, and wishing myself dead; and but for the hope of being free, I have no doubt but that I should have killed myself, or done something for which I should have been killed. While in this state of mind, I was eager to hear any one speak of slavery. I was a ready listener. Every little while, I could hear something about the abolitionists.³ It was some time before I found what the word meant. It was always used in such connections as to make it an interesting word to me. If a slave ran away and succeeded in getting clear, or if a slave killed his master, set fire to a barn, or did any thing very wrong in the mind of a slaveholder, it was spoken of as the fruit of *abolition*. Hearing the word in this connection very often, I set about learning what it meant. The dictionary afforded me little or no help. I found it was “the act of abolishing”; but then I did not know what was to be abolished. Here I was perplexed. I did not dare to ask any one about its meaning, for I was satisfied that it was something they

wanted me to know very little about. After a patient waiting, I got one of our city papers, containing an account of the number of petitions from the north, praying for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, and of the slave trade between the States. From this time I understood the words *abolition* and *abolitionist*, and always drew near when that word was spoken, expecting to hear something of importance to myself and fellow-slaves. The light broke in upon me by degrees. I went one day down on the wharf of Mr. Waters; and seeing two Irishmen unloading a scow of stone, I went, unasked, and helped them. When we had finished, one of them came to me and asked me if I were a slave. I told him I was. He asked, "Are ye a slave for life?" I told him that I was. The good Irishman seemed to be deeply affected by the statement. He said to the other that it was a pity so fine a little fellow as myself should be a slave for life. He said it was a shame to hold me. They both advised me to run away to the north; that I should find friends there, and that I should be free. I pretended not to be interested in what they said, and treated them as if I did not understand them; for I feared they might be treacherous. White men have been known to encourage slaves to escape, and then, to get the reward, catch them and return them to their masters. I was afraid that these seemingly good men might use me so; but I nevertheless remembered their advice, and from that time I resolved to run away. I looked forward to a time at which it would be safe for me to escape. I was too young to think of doing so immediately; besides, I wished to learn how to write, as I might have occasion to write my own pass. I consoled myself with the hope that I should one day find a good chance. Meanwhile, I would learn to write.

The idea as to how I might learn to write was suggested to me by being in Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard, and frequently seeing the ship carpenters, after hewing, and getting a piece of timber ready for use, write on the timber the name of that part of the ship for which it was intended. When a piece of timber was intended for the larboard side, it would be marked thus — "L." When a piece was for the starboard side, it would be marked thus — "S." A piece for the larboard side forward, would be marked thus — "L.F." When a piece was for starboard side forward, it would be marked thus — "S.F." For larboard aft, it would be marked thus — "L.A." For starboard aft, it would be marked thus — "S.A." I soon learned the names of these letters, and for what they were intended when placed upon a piece of timber in the ship-yard. I immediately commenced copying them, and in a short time was able to make the four letters named. After that, when I met with any boy who I knew could write, I would tell him I could write as well as he. The next word would be, "I don't believe you. Let me see you try it." I would then make the letters which I had been so fortunate as to learn, and ask him to beat that. In this way I got a good many lessons in writing, which it is quite possible I should never have gotten in any other way. During this time, my copy-book was the board fence, brick wall, and pavement; my pen and ink was a lump of chalk. With these, I learned mainly how to write. I then commenced and continued copying the Italics in Webster's Spelling Book, until I could make them all without looking on the book. By this time, my little Master Thomas had gone to school, and learned how to write, and had written over a number of copy-books. These had been brought home, and shown to some of our near neighbors, and then laid aside. My mistress used to go to

class meeting at the Wilk Street meeting-house every Monday afternoon, and leave me to take care of the house. When left thus, I used to spend the time in writing in the spaces left in Master Thomas's copy-book, copying what he had written. I continued to do this until I could write a hand very similar to that of Master Thomas. Thus, after a long, tedious effort for years, I finally succeeded in learning how to write.

In a very short time after I went to live at Baltimore, my old master's youngest son Richard died; and in about three years and six months after his death, my old master, Captain Anthony, died, leaving only his son, Andrew, and daughter, Lucretia, to share his estate. He died while on a visit to see his daughter at Hillsborough. Cut off thus unexpectedly, he left no will as to the disposal of his property. It was therefore necessary to have a valuation of the property, that it might be equally divided between Mrs. Lucretia and Master Andrew. I was immediately sent for, to be valued with the other property. Here again my feelings rose up in detestation of slavery. I had now a new conception of my degraded condition. Prior to this, I had become, if not insensible to my lot, at least partly so. I left Baltimore with a young heart overborne with sadness, and a soul full of apprehension. I took passage with Captain Rowe, in the schooner *Wild Cat*, and, after a sail of about twenty-four hours, I found myself near the place of my birth. I had now been absent from it almost, if not quite, five years. I, however, remembered the place very well. I was only about five years old when I left it, to go and live with my old master on Colonel Lloyd's plantation; so that I was now between ten and eleven years old.

We were all ranked together at the valuation. Men and women, old and young, married and single, were ranked with horses, sheep, and swine. There were horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children, all holding the same rank in the scale of being, and were all subjected to the same narrow examination. Silvery-headed age and sprightly youth, maids and matrons, had to undergo the same indelicate inspection. At this moment, I saw more clearly than ever the brutalizing effects of slavery upon both slave and slaveholder.

After the valuation, then came the division. I have no language to express the high excitement and deep anxiety which were felt among us poor slaves during this time. Our fate for life was now to be decided. We had no more voice in that decision than the brutes among whom we were ranked. A single word from the white men was enough — against all our wishes, prayers, and entreaties — to sunder forever the dearest friends, dearest kindred, and strongest ties known to human beings. In addition to the pain of separation, there was the horrid dread of falling into the hands of Master Andrew. He was known to us all as being a most cruel wretch, — a common drunkard, who had, by his reckless mismanagement and profligate dissipation, already wasted a large portion of his father's property. We all felt that we might as well be sold at once to the Georgia traders, as to pass into his hands; for we knew that that would be our inevitable condition, — a condition held by us all in the utmost horror and dread.

I suffered more anxiety than most of my fellow-slaves. I had known what it was to be kindly treated; they had known nothing of

the kind. They had seen little or nothing of the world. They were in very deed men and women of sorrow, and acquainted with grief. Their backs had been made familiar with the bloody lash, so that they had become callous; mine was yet tender; for while at Baltimore I got few whippings, and few slaves could boast of a kinder master and mistress than myself; and the thought of passing out of their hands into those of Master Andrew — a man who, but a few days before, to give me a sample of his bloody disposition, took my little brother by the throat, threw him on the ground, and with the heel of his boot stamped upon his head till the blood gushed from his nose and ears — was well calculated to make me anxious as to my fate. After he had committed this savage outrage upon my brother, he turned to me, and said that was the way he meant to serve me one of these days, — meaning, I suppose, when I came into his possession.

Thanks to a kind Providence, I fell to the portion of Mrs. Lucretia, and was sent immediately back to Baltimore, to live again in the family of Master Hugh. Their joy at my return equalled their sorrow at my departure. It was a glad day to me. I had escaped a worse fate than lion's jaws. I was absent from Baltimore, for the purpose of valuation and division, just about one month, and it seemed to have been six.

Very soon after my return to Baltimore, my mistress, Lucretia, died, leaving her husband and child, Amanda; and in a very short time after her death, Master Andrew died. Now all the property of my old master, slaves included, was in the hands of strangers, — strangers who had had nothing to do with accumulating it. Not a

slave was left free. All remained slaves, from the youngest to the oldest. If any one thing in my experience, more than another, served to deepen my conviction of the infernal character of slavery, and to fill me with unutterable loathing of slaveholders, it was their base ingratitude to my poor old grandmother. She had served my old master faithfully from youth to old age. She had been the source of all his wealth; she had peopled his plantation with slaves; she had become a great grandmother in his service. She had rocked him in infancy, attended him in childhood, served him through life, and at his death wiped from his icy brow the cold death-sweat, and closed his eyes forever. She was nevertheless left a slave — a slave for life — a slave in the hands of strangers; and in their hands she saw her children, her grandchildren, and her great-grandchildren, divided, like so many sheep, without being gratified with the small privilege of a single word, as to their or her own destiny. And, to cap the climax of their base ingratitude and fiendish barbarity, my grandmother, who was now very old, having outlived my old master and all his children, having seen the beginning and end of all of them, and her present owners finding she was of but little value, her frame already racked with the pains of old age, and complete helplessness fast stealing over her once active limbs, they took her to the woods, built her a little hut, put up a little mud-chimney, and then made her welcome to the privilege of supporting herself there in perfect loneliness; thus virtually turning her out to die! If my poor old grandmother now lives, she lives to suffer in utter loneliness; she lives to remember and mourn over the loss of children, the loss of grandchildren, and the loss of great-grandchildren. They are, in the language of the slave's poet, Whittier,⁴ —

Gone, gone, sold and gone
To the rice swamp dank and lone,
 Where the slave-whip ceaseless swings,
 Where the noisome insect stings,
 Where the fever-demon strews
 Poison with the falling dews,
 Where the sickly sunbeams glare
 Through the hot and misty air: —
 Gone, gone, sold and gone
 To the rice swamp dank and lone,
 From Virginia hills and waters —
 Woe is me, my stolen daughters!

The hearth is desolate. The children, the unconscious children, who once sang and danced in her presence, are gone. She gropes her way, in the darkness of age, for a drink of water. Instead of the voices of her children, she hears by day the moans of the dove, and by night the screams of the hideous owl. All is gloom. The grave is at the door. And now, when weighed down by the pains and aches of old age, when the head inclines to the feet, when the beginning and ending of human existence meet, and helpless infancy and painful old age combine together — at this time, this most needful time, the time for the exercise of that tenderness and affection which children only can exercise towards a declining parent — my poor old grandmother, the devoted mother of twelve children, is left all alone, in yonder little hut, before a few dim embers. She stands — she sits — she staggers — she falls — she groans — she dies — and there are none of her children or grandchildren present, to wipe from her wrinkled

brow the cold sweat of death, or to place beneath the sod her fallen remains. Will not a righteous God visit for these things?

In about two years after the death of Mrs. Lucretia, Master Thomas married his second wife. Her name was Rowena Hamilton. She was the eldest daughter of Mr. William Hamilton. Master now lived in St. Michael's. Not long after his marriage, a misunderstanding took place between himself and Master Hugh; and as a means of punishing his brother, he took me from him to live with himself at St. Michael's. Here I underwent another most painful separation. It, however, was not so severe as the one I dreaded at the division of property; for, during this interval, a great change had taken place in Master Hugh and his once kind and affectionate wife. The influence of brandy upon him, and of slavery upon her, had effected a disastrous change in the characters of both; so that, as far as they were concerned, I thought I had little to lose by the change. But it was not to them that I was attached. It was to those little Baltimore boys that I felt the strongest attachment. I had received many good lessons from them, and was still receiving them, and the thought of leaving them was painful indeed. I was leaving, too, without the hope of ever being allowed to return. Master Thomas had said he would never let me return again. The barrier betwixt himself and brother he considered impassable.

I then had to regret that I did not at least make the attempt to carry out my resolution to run away; for the chances of success are tenfold greater from the city than from the country.

I sailed from Baltimore for St. Michael's in the sloop *Amanda*, Captain Edward Dodson. On my passage, I paid particular attention to the direction which the steamboats took to go to Philadelphia. I found, instead of going down, on reaching North Point they went up the bay, in a north-easterly direction. I deemed this knowledge of the utmost importance. My determination to run away was again revived. I resolved to wait only so long as the offering of a favorable opportunity. When that came, I was determined to be off.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. In [paragraph 2](#), Douglass describes Mrs. Auld as possessing “the fatal poison of irresponsible power.” What are the ethical responsibilities of power in her relationship with Douglass?
2. In what sense were the laws of Douglass's time immoral? How can a law be immoral?
3. Did slave owners think it immoral to teach slaves to read and write?
4. Was it ethical for Douglass to learn to read and write even though he knew it was prohibited for him to do so?
5. How does an ethical contract between slave and slaveholder function? What were the responsibilities of each to the other?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. The society in which Douglass lived was governed by laws established by elected officials who had benefited from the authors of the Constitution of the United States, which set itself as the law of the land. How could slaveholders in Maryland have considered it ethical to hold other human beings as slaves? What ethical loopholes were apparent in the Constitution?

2. What is the most important political issue raised in the essay?
Douglass never talks about the law, but he implies a great deal about justice and morality. How do justice and morality intersect in Douglass's story of his life as a slave? How aware does he seem to have been that he was being dealt with in an unethical fashion?
3. The vast number of slaveholders during Douglass's time were church-goers and passionate Christians. We often think of religion as a bulwark of morality and ethics, so how could avid religious citizens behave in a way that we now think of as immoral and unethical? Is it possible that there was a disconnect between religion and morality in the slave states? Is it possible that there is no relationship between morality and religion to start with?
4. What, on the whole, is Douglass's attitude toward white people?
Examine his statements about them and establish as far as possible his feelings regarding their character. Is he bitter about his slavery experiences? Does he condemn the society that supported slavery as having been immoral?
5. How effective is the detailed description in this selection? Choose the best descriptive passages and analyze them for their effectiveness in context. What does Douglass hope to achieve by giving so much attention to such descriptions? How does his description help you better understand the concept of ethical behavior?
6. One of the most constant defenses of the ethics of slavery — even after the Civil War — was that it was for the good of the slaves. Even some of the freed slaves told interviewers in the 1930s that things had been better for them under slavery than they were during the Great Depression. Is the view that slavery was good for the slaves in any way an ethical view? Is it a moral view? What's wrong with it?
7. Douglass escaped from slavery by deceiving the authorities into thinking he was an able-bodied seaman with the right to travel. He broke the law at that time, and he broke it again when he remained free. Why should we not condemn him for immoral behavior and an ethical lapse? The Aulds certainly regarded him as a criminal and as someone who acted immorally. Why should we not agree with them? What would Martin Luther King Jr., have said about his behavior?

■ ■ CONNECTIONS

1. Which writer would Douglass have expected to understand how difficult and unjust his life under slavery was? How would [Frantz Fanon](#), [Martin Luther King Jr.](#), or [Thomas Jefferson](#) respond to his *Narrative*? What letter might each of these writers send to him?
2. Aristotle is clear in saying that happiness is the greatest good for man. Yet in Aristotle's Athens, slavery was a simple, accepted fact of everyday life, and Aristotle likely did not have slaves' interests in mind when he wrote "[The Aim of Man](#)." How might Frederick Douglass have responded to the way Aristotle connected virtue and happiness? How would Douglass's having been a slave affect his views of Aristotle's respect for the state? Did Douglass consider virtue as a means to happiness? How might Douglass have critiqued Aristotle's views of the ultimate good? For Douglass, what constituted the ultimate good?



Sigmund Freud *The Oedipus Complex*



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SIGMUND FREUD (1856–1939) is, in the minds of many, the founder of modern psychiatry. He developed the psychoanalytic method: the examination of the mind using dream analysis, the analysis of the unconscious through free association, and the correlation of findings with attitudes toward sexuality and sexual development. His theories changed the way people treated

neurosis and most other mental disorders. Today we use terms he either invented or championed, such as *psychoanalysis*, *penis envy*, *Oedipus complex*, and *wish fulfillment*.

Freud was born in Freiberg, Moravia (now Pribor in the Czech Republic), and moved to Vienna, Austria, when he was four. He pursued a medical career and soon began exploring neurology, which stimulated him to begin his psychoanalytic methods. *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) is one of his first important books. It was followed in rapid succession by a number of groundbreaking studies: *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1904), *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), *Totem and Taboo* (1913), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), and *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930). Freud's personal life in Vienna was essentially uneventful until he was put under house arrest by the Nazis in 1938 because he was Jewish. He was released and then moved to London, where he died the following year.

As a movement, psychoanalysis shocked most of the world by postulating a superego, which establishes high standards of personal behavior; an ego, which corresponds to the apparent personality; an id, which includes the deepest primitive forces of life; and an unconscious, into which thoughts and memories we cannot face are repressed or sublimated. The origin of much mental illness, the theory presumes, lies in the inability of the mind to find a way to sublimate — to express in harmless and creative ways — the painful thoughts that have been repressed. Dreams

and unconscious actions sometimes act as releases or harmless expressions of these thoughts and memories.

As Freud states in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the unconscious works in complex ways to help us cope with feelings and desires that our superego deems unacceptable. Dreams are mental events, not necessarily connected to physical events. The repression of important emotions, a constant process, often results in dreams that express repressed feelings in a harmless and sometimes symbolic way. In a sense, dreams help us maintain our mental health.

Further, dreams are a primary subject matter of psychoanalysis because they reveal a great deal about the unconscious mind, especially the material that we repress from our consciousness. His discussion of the Oedipus complex, which follows, is a classic case in point. Most people found Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex very compelling once they began to understand the details of its expression. Freud assumed that when we are infants we love our opposite-sex parent and hate our same-sex parent. These feelings of love and hate change as we grow, but they can still linger and cause neurotic behavior. Because these feelings are repressed into the unconscious, we are not aware of them as adults.

FREUD'S RHETORIC

This selection comes from a section of *The Interpretation of Dreams* in which Freud discusses what he calls "typical dreams."

It is here that he speaks directly about his theory of the Oedipus complex and links it specifically with two major pieces of Western literature. *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles (496–406 B.C.E.) and *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare (1564–1616) are tragedies in which some of the unconscious desires of the hero to marry his mother are either carried out, as in *Oedipus Rex*, or strongly hinted at, as in *Hamlet*.

Freud realizes that many readers will not be convinced that such a compulsion exists. He explains, however, that because most young people outgrow the compulsion and thereafter repress it, most adults are unaware of their own oedipal feelings.

The rhetorical strategy of introducing two classic dramatic works that are centuries apart and demonstrating what they have in common is effective in helping the reader understand that the psychological condition Freud refers to is not unknown to Western culture. His analysis of his patients' dreams has helped dredge up the original content and the connection with the oedipal urge, thus freeing them of a sense of guilt and a need for self-punishment.

[Paragraphs 2–6](#) detail the story of King Oedipus and the strange way in which he eventually married his mother and thus brought a plague upon his land. Freud's point is that this ancient text reveals an aspect of the inner nature of the human mind that has not changed for many thousands of years.

As he tells us, his patients have dreams of intercourse with parents and then feel such torrents of guilt and shame that they sometimes become neurotic. The fact that Oedipus severely

punishes himself at the end of the play corresponds with the sense of guilt that Freud's patients experience. Hamlet is even more severely punished and suffers even more psychological anguish throughout the play, even though he never commits incest with his mother. The power of thought is enough. Hamlet is described as "a pathologically irresolute character which might be classed as neurasthenic" ([para. 9](#)). In other words, he could have benefited from Freud's psychoanalysis.

Freud uses these two great plays as examples of his theories because he sees them as imaginative constructs that work out the repressed feelings people have always had. They are similar to dreams in that they are written by poets; and poets who rely on inspiration have traditionally drawn on the unconscious. Because these two tragedies are so important to Western literature, they have a special value that no minor literature could have. Consequently, they have been enormously convincing to those interested in the way the mind works. What Freud has done with these works is to hold them up as a mirror. In that mirror one can see quite clearly the evidence for the Oedipus complex that would be totally invisible in any self-examination. It is one of Freud's great rhetorical achievements.

In [paragraph 8](#), Freud makes some other observations about the dreams some of his patients have had in which they imagined themselves killing their parents. This is such a horrible idea for most people that Freud is surprised that our internal censor permits such dreams to occur. His theory is that the thought is so monstrous that the dream censor "is not armed to meet" it ([para.](#)

8). His analysis suggests that worry about a parent may disguise the unconscious wish that the parent should die. Freud mentions “our explanation of dreams in general” ([para. 8](#)), by which he means that dreams are wish fulfillments. If that is true, those who dream about killing a parent are likely to be deeply upset and may make themselves neurotic by their own sense of guilt.

Though most people go through an infantile oedipal stage, they usually grow out of it early in life. Freud suggests, however, that those who do not grow out of it may need psychoanalytic help.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Sigmund Freud’s “The Oedipus Complex.” Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What, exactly, is the Oedipus complex?
2. How does the Oedipus complex express itself in dreams?
3. How do *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet* illustrate the Oedipus complex?

From *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Translated by James Strachey.

The Oedipus Complex

In my experience, which is already extensive, the chief part in the mental lives of all children who later become psychoneurotics is played by their parents. Being in love with the one parent and hating the other are among the essential constituents of the stock of psychical impulses which is formed at that time and which is of such importance in determining the symptoms of the later neurosis. It is not my belief, however, that psychoneurotics differ sharply in this respect from other human beings who remain normal — that they are able, that is, to create something absolutely new and peculiar to themselves. It is far more probable — and this is confirmed by occasional observations on normal children — that they are only distinguished by exhibiting on a magnified scale feelings of love and hatred to their parents which occur less obviously and less intensely in the minds of most children.

This discovery is confirmed by a legend that has come down to us from classical antiquity: a legend whose profound and universal power to move can only be understood if the hypothesis I have put forward in regard to the psychology of children has an equally universal validity. What I have in mind is the legend of King Oedipus and Sophocles' drama which bears his name.

Oedipus, son of Laius, King of Thebes, and of Jocasta, was exposed as an infant because an oracle had warned Laius that the still unborn child would be his father's murderer. The child was

rescued, and grew up as a prince in an alien court, until, in doubts as to his origin, he too questioned the oracle and was warned to avoid his home since he was destined to murder his father and take his mother in marriage. On the road leading away from what he believed was his home, he met King Laius and slew him in a sudden quarrel. He came next to Thebes and solved the riddle set him by the Sphinx who barred his way. Out of gratitude the Thebans made him their king and gave him Jocasta's hand in marriage. He reigned long in peace and honor, and she who, unknown to him, was his mother bore him two sons and two daughters. Then at last a plague broke out and the Thebans made enquiry once more of the oracle. It is at this point that Sophocles' tragedy opens. The messengers bring back the reply that the plague will cease when the murderer of Laius has been driven from the land.

But he, where is he? Where shall now be read

The fading record of this ancient guilt?

The action of the play consists in nothing other than the process of revealing, with cunning delays and ever-mounting excitement — a process that can be likened to the work of a psychoanalysis — that Oedipus himself is the murderer of Laius, but further that he is the son of the murdered man and of Jocasta. Appalled at the abomination which he has unwittingly perpetrated, Oedipus blinds himself and forsakes his home. The oracle has been fulfilled.

Oedipus Rex is what is known as a tragedy of destiny. Its tragic effect is said to lie in the contrast between the supreme will of the

gods and the vain attempts of mankind to escape the evil that threatens them. The lesson which, it is said, the deeply moved spectator should learn from the tragedy is submission to the divine will and realization of his own impotence. Modern dramatists have accordingly tried to achieve a similar tragic effect by weaving the same contrast into a plot invented by themselves. But the spectators have looked on unmoved while a curse or an oracle was fulfilled in spite of all the efforts of some innocent man: later tragedies of destiny have failed in their effect.

If *Oedipus Rex* moves a modern audience no less than it did the contemporary Greek one, the explanation can only be that its effect does not lie in the contrast between destiny and human will, but is to be looked for in the particular nature of the material on which that contrast is exemplified. There must be something which makes a voice within us ready to recognize the compelling force of destiny in the *Oedipus*, while we can dismiss as merely arbitrary such dispositions as are laid down in *Die Ahnfrau*¹ or other modern tragedies of destiny. And a factor of this kind is in fact involved in the story of King Oedipus. His destiny moves us only because it might have been ours — because the oracle laid the same curse upon us before our birth as upon him. It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father. Our dreams convince us that that is so. King Oedipus, who slew his father Laius and married his mother Jocasta, merely shows us the fulfillment of our own childhood wishes. But, more fortunate than he, we have meanwhile succeeded, insofar as we have not become psychoneurotics, in detaching our sexual

impulses from our mothers and in forgetting our jealousy of our fathers. Here is one in whom these primeval wishes of our childhood have been fulfilled, and we shrink back from him with the whole force of the repression by which those wishes have since that time been held down within us. While the poet, as he unravels the past, brings to light the guilt of Oedipus, he is at the same time compelling us to recognize our own inner minds, in which those same impulses, though suppressed, are still to be found. The contrast with which the closing Chorus leaves us confronted —

It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father. Our dreams convince us that that is so.

... Fix on Oedipus your eyes,

Who resolved the dark enigma, noblest champion and most wise.

Like a star his envied fortune mounted beaming far and wide:

Now he sinks in seas of anguish, whelmed beneath a raging tide ...

— strikes as a warning at ourselves and our pride, at us who since our childhood have grown so wise and so mighty in our own

eyes. Like Oedipus, we live in ignorance of these wishes, repugnant to morality, which have been forced upon us by Nature, and after their revelation we may all of us well seek to close our eyes to the scenes of our childhood.²

There is an unmistakable indication in the text of Sophocles' tragedy itself that the legend of Oedipus sprang from some primeval dream material which had as its content the distressing disturbance of a child's relation to his parents owing to the first stirrings of sexuality. At a point when Oedipus, though he is not yet enlightened, has begun to feel troubled by his recollection of the oracle, Jocasta consoles him by referring to a dream which many people dream, though, as she thinks, it has no meaning:

Many a man ere now in dreams hath lain

With her who bare him. He hath least annoy

Who with such omens troubleth not his mind.

Today, just as then, many men dream of having sexual relations with their mothers, and speak of the fact with indignation and astonishment. It is clearly the key to the tragedy and the complement to the dream of the dreamer's father being dead. The story of Oedipus is the reaction of the imagination to these two typical dreams. And just as these dreams, when dreamt by adults, are accompanied by feelings of repulsion, so too the legend must include horror and self-punishment. Its further modification originates once again in a misconceived secondary revision of the material, which has sought to exploit it for theological purposes.

The attempt to harmonize divine omnipotence with human responsibility must naturally fail in connection with this subject matter just as with any other.

Another of the great creations of tragic poetry, Shakespeare's Hamlet, has its roots in the same soil as Oedipus Rex. But the changed treatment of the same material reveals the whole difference in the mental life of these two widely separated epochs of civilization: the secular advance of repression in the emotional life of mankind. In Oedipus the child's wishful fantasy that underlies it is brought into the open and realized as it would be in a dream. In Hamlet it remains repressed; and — just as in the case of a neurosis — we only learn of its existence from its inhibiting consequences. Strangely enough, the overwhelming effect produced by the more modern tragedy has turned out to be compatible with the fact that people have remained completely in the dark as to the hero's character. The play is built up on Hamlet's hesitations over fulfilling the task of revenge that is assigned to him; but its text offers no reasons or motives for these hesitations and an immense variety of attempts at interpreting them have failed to produce a result. According to the view which was originated by Goethe³ and is still the prevailing one today, Hamlet represents the type of man whose power of direct action is paralyzed by an excessive development of his intellect. (He is "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought.") According to another view, the dramatist has tried to portray a pathologically irresolute character which might be classed as neurasthenic. The plot of the drama shows us, however, that Hamlet is far from being represented as a person incapable of taking any action. We see

him doing so on two occasions: first in a sudden outburst of temper, when he runs his sword through the eavesdropper behind the arras, and secondly in a premeditated and even crafty fashion, when, with all the callousness of a Renaissance prince, he sends the two courtiers to the death that had been planned for himself. What is it, then, that inhibits him in fulfilling the task set him by his father's ghost? The answer, once again, is that it is the peculiar nature of the task. Hamlet is able to do anything — except take vengeance on the man who did away with his father and took that father's place with his mother, the man who shows him the repressed wishes of his own childhood realized. Thus the loathing which should drive him on to revenge is replaced in him by self-reproaches, by scruples of conscience, which remind him that he himself is literally no better than the sinner whom he is to punish. Here I have translated into conscious terms what was bound to remain unconscious in Hamlet's mind; and if anyone is inclined to call him a hysteric, I can only accept the fact as one that is implied by my interpretation. The distaste for sexuality expressed by Hamlet in his conversation with Ophelia fits in very well with this: the same distaste which was destined to take possession of the poet's mind more and more during the years that followed, and which reached its extreme expression in *Timon of Athens*. For it can of course only be the poet's own mind which confronts us in Hamlet. I observe in a book on Shakespeare by Georg Brandes (1896) a statement that Hamlet was written immediately after the death of Shakespeare's father (in 1601), that is, under the immediate impact of his bereavement and, as we may well assume, while his childhood feelings about his father had been freshly revived. It is known, too, that Shakespeare's own son who

died at an early age bore the name of “Hamnet,” which is identical with “Hamlet.” Just as Hamlet deals with the relation of a son to his parents, so Macbeth (written at approximately the same period) is concerned with the subject of childlessness. But just as all neurotic symptoms, and, for that matter, dreams, are capable of being “over-interpreted” and indeed need to be, if they are to be fully understood, so all genuinely creative writings are the product of more than a single motive and more than a single impulse in the poet’s mind, and are open to more than a single interpretation. In what I have written I have only attempted to interpret the deepest layer of impulses in the mind of the creative writer.⁴

I cannot leave the subject of typical dreams of the death of loved relatives, without adding a few more words to throw light on their significance for the theory of dreams in general. In these dreams we find the highly unusual condition realized of a dream-thought formed by a repressed wish entirely eluding censorship and passing into the dream without modification. There must be special factors at work to make this event possible, and I believe that the occurrence of these dreams is facilitated by two such factors. Firstly, there is no wish that seems more remote from us than this one: “we couldn’t even *dream*” — so we believe — of wishing such a thing. For this reason the dream-censorship is not armed to meet such a monstrosity, just as Solon’s⁵ penal code contained no punishment for parricide. Secondly, in this case the repressed and unsuspected wish is particularly often met halfway by a residue from the previous day in the form of a *worry* about the safety of the person concerned. This worry can only make its way into the dream by availing itself of the corresponding wish;

while the wish can disguise itself behind the worry that has become active during the day. We may feel inclined to think that things are simpler than this and that one merely carries on during the night and in dreams with what one has been turning over in one's mind during the day; but if so we shall be leaving dreams of the death of people of whom the dreamer is fond completely in the air and without any connection with our explanation of dreams in general, and we shall thus be clinging quite unnecessarily to a riddle which is perfectly capable of solution.

It is also instructive to consider the relation of these dreams to anxiety-dreams. In the dreams we have been discussing, a repressed wish has found a means of evading censorship — and the distortion which censorship involves. The invariable concomitant is that painful feelings are experienced in the dream. In just the same way anxiety-dreams only occur if the censorship has been wholly or partly overpowered; and, on the other hand, the overpowering of the censorship is facilitated if anxiety has already been produced as an immediate sensation arising from somatic⁶ sources. We can thus plainly see the purpose for which the censorship exercises its office and brings about the distortion of dreams: it does so *in order to prevent the generation of anxiety or other forms of distressing affect*.



QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What role do parents play in the lives of those who become neurotics?
2. Do psychoneurotics differ substantially from normal people?

3. What does Freud expect his example of *Oedipus Rex* to call up in the mind of the reader?
4. What is a tragedy of destiny?
5. In what ways are all of us like Oedipus?
6. How is literature related to dreams, according to Freud?
7. Why do dreams sometimes need to be overinterpreted?
8. How does censorship operate in dreams?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Most adults have absolutely no awareness of having had an oedipal period in their infancy. However, you may have observed oedipal behavior in young children. If so, describe how the children behaved and if possible describe how they have grown up and whether they have left the oedipal stage behind. Do your observations help bolster Freud's views, or do they help weaken them?
2. Describe in as much detail as possible any anxiety dreams you may have had. Often anxiety dreams are repetitive and recurrent. What are the circumstances in which you find yourself in your dream? What worries you most in the dream? What threatens you most? How does the dream resolve itself? Does the dream provoke guilt or shame? How would you interpret the dream in light of what you have read here?
3. If you find yourself unable to remember your dreams, interview some friends and "collect" dreams from them. Ask them for dreams that make them feel uneasy — anxiety dreams. Have them write down their dreams and then ask them to talk about events in their waking life that preceded the dreams. See if there are contributing events or anticipations in the mind of the dreamers that would lead them to have anxiety dreams. See, too, if there are any patterns to dreams of different people. Are there any typical dreams shared by your friends?

4. What are your typical dreams? Try to write them out as if they were plays. Identify characters, setting, and time, and then write the dialogue and stage directions that would give a good approximation of the content of the dreams. Do not censor your dreams or try to “overanalyze” them (despite Freud’s recommendation). Do your best to make the dreams clear in their expression. Does this approach make your dreams any more meaningful to you? Explain.
5. Does your reading of *Hamlet* help bear out Freud’s theory that suggests Hamlet is suffering from an Oedipus complex? What is his relationship to his mother? How does she regard him? Is his killing of King Claudius an act of parricide? Is Hamlet’s punishment warranted? Argue for or against Freud’s view of the play.
6. In [paragraph 6](#), Freud states, “There is an unmistakable indication in the text of Sophocles’ tragedy itself that the legend of Oedipus sprang from some primeval dream material.” Examine his evidence for this claim and decide yourself whether this seems a reasonable conclusion.
7. Most horror films involve monstrous actions and severe punishment. Is it possible that one of the functions of horror films is to reveal some of the inner nature of our minds somewhat the way *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet* do? Choose a favorite film and analyze it in terms of its revealing hidden desires that might trouble us if we felt them consciously and acted on them in waking life.

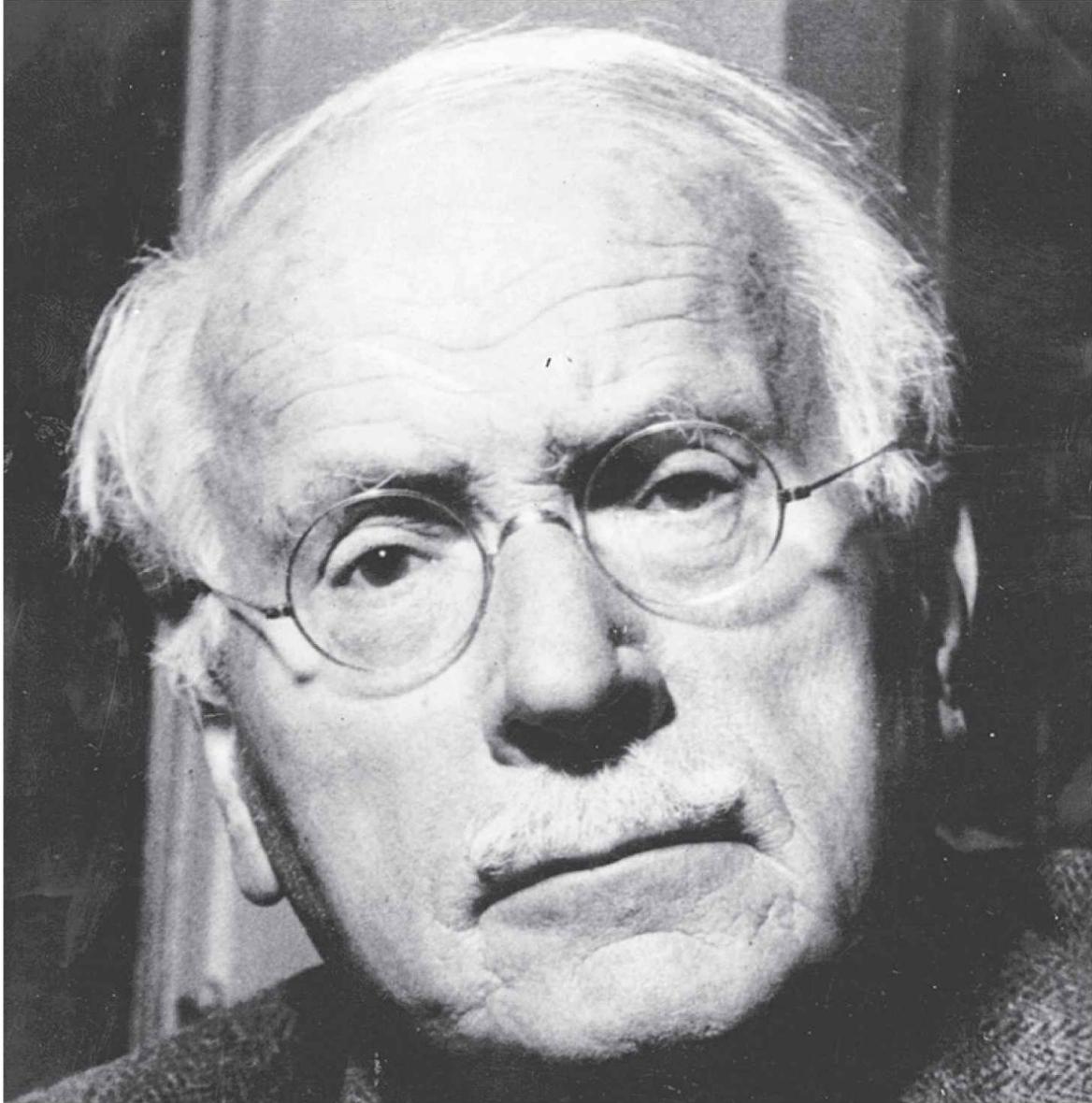
CONNECTIONS

1. Plato’s concerns in “[The Allegory of the Cave](#)” point to a level of reality that humans cannot reach because of the limitations of sensory apprehension. Is it also true that the dream world represents a level of reality that is impossible to reach because of the limitations of the conscious waking mind? Which part of the mind — the conscious or the unconscious — does Freud seem to regard as primary in his discussion of the Oedipus complex? Is there the sense that he regards one or the other as possessing a greater “reality”? How do his views fit with those of Plato?

2. Both Freud and [Frantz Fanon](#) were psychiatrists. Freud was interested in the power of myths, while Fanon appears less interested in their importance. However, the Oedipus myth as Freud understands it may also, on a symbolic level, be political in nature. Write an essay that explores the possibility that Fanon's violence against the colonialist may be symbolically violence against the "father." How well does the myth fit the circumstances that Fanon explores?



Carl Jung *The Personal and the Collective Unconscious*



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CARL GUSTAV JUNG (1875–1961), Freud's most famous disciple, was a Swiss physician who collaborated with Freud from 1907 to 1912, when the two argued about the nature of the unconscious. Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious* (1912) posits an unconscious that is composed of more than the ego, superego,

and id. According to Jung, an additional aspect of the unconscious is a collection of archetypal images that can be inherited by members of the same group. Experience clarifies these images, but the images in turn direct experience.

In one of his essays on the collective unconscious, Jung asserts that the great myths express the archetypes of actions and heroes stored in the unconscious by elucidating them for the individual and society. These archetypes represent themselves in mythic literature in images, such as the great father or the great mother, or in patterns of action, such as disobedience and self-sacrifice. They transcend social barriers and exemplify themselves similarly in most people in any given cultural group. For Jung, the individual must adapt to the archetypes that reveal themselves in the myths in order to be psychically healthy.

Like Freud, Jung postulates a specific model of the way the mind works: he claims the existence not only of a conscious mind — which all of us can attest to from experience and common sense — but also of an unconscious component to the mind. He argues that we are unaware of the content of our unconscious mind except, perhaps, in dreams (which occur when we are unconscious), which Freud and others insist speak to us in symbols rather than in direct language. Jung also acknowledges the symbolic nature of the unconscious but disagrees with the source of the content of the unconscious mind.

In “The Personal and the Collective Unconscious” (1916), Jung describes the pattern of psychological transference that most

psychoanalysts experience with their patients. In the case presented here, the patient's problems were associated with her father, and the transference was the normal one of conceiving of the doctor — in this case, Jung — in terms of the father. When this transference occurs, the patient often is cured of the problems that brought her to the psychoanalyst, but in this case the transference was incomplete. Jung offers a detailed analysis of the dreams that revealed the problems with the transference and describes the intellectual state of the woman whose dreams form the basis of the discussion. She is intelligent, conscious of the mechanism of transference, and careful about her own inner life. Yet the dream that Jung analyzes had a content that he could not relate to her personal life.

In an attempt to explain his inability to analyze the woman's dream strictly in terms of her personal life, Jung reexamines Freud's definition of the unconscious. As Jung explains Freud's view, the unconscious is a repository for material that is produced by the conscious mind and later repressed so as not to interfere with the function of the conscious mind. Thus, painful memories and unpleasant fears are often repressed and rarely become problems because they are sublimated — transformed into harmless activity, often dreams — and released. According to Freud, the material in the unconscious mind develops solely from personal experience.

Jung, however, argues that personal experiences form only part of the individual's unconscious, what he calls the "personal unconscious" ([para. 17](#)). For the patient in this essay, the images

in the dream that he and the patient at first classified as a transference dream (in which the doctor became the father/lover figure) had qualities that could not be explained fully by transference. Instead, the dream seemed to represent a primordial figure, a god. From this, Jung develops the view that such a figure is cultural in nature and not personal. Nothing in the patient's life pointed to her concern for a god of the kind that developed in her dream. Jung proposes that the images that constituted the content of her dream were not a result of personal experience or education but, instead, were inherited. Jung defines this portion of the unconscious as the "collective unconscious" ([para. 19](#)).

Jung's theories proved unacceptable to Freud. After their collaboration ended, Jung studied the world's myths and mythic systems, including alchemy and occult literature. In them he saw many of the archetypal symbols that he felt were revealed in dreams — including symbolic quests, sudden transformations, dramatic or threatening landscapes, and images of God. His conclusions were that this literature, most or all of which was suppressed or rejected by modern religions such as Christianity, was a repository for the symbols of the collective unconscious — at least of Western civilization and perhaps of other civilizations.

JUNG'S RHETORIC

Like Freud, Jung tells a story. His selection is a narrative beginning with a recapitulation of Freud's view of the unconscious. Jung tells us that according to the conventional view, the contents

of the unconscious have passed “the threshold of consciousness” ([para. 2](#)): in other words, they were once in the conscious mind of the individual. However, Jung also asserts that “the unconscious also contains components that have *not yet* reached the threshold of consciousness” ([para. 3](#)). At least two questions arise from this assertion: What is that content, and where did it come from?

Jung then provides the example ([para. 5](#)) of the woman whose therapy he was conducting. He tells us about the woman’s treatment and how such treatment works in a general sense. He explains the phenomenon of transference, claiming that “a successful transference can ... cause the whole neurosis to disappear” ([para. 5](#)). Near the end of this patient’s treatment he analyzed her dreams and found something he did not expect. He relates the narrative of the dream ([para. 10](#)), which includes the image of a superhuman father figure in a field of wheat swaying in the wind. From this he concludes that the image of the dream is not the doctor/father/lover figure that is common to transference — and that the patient was thoroughly aware of — but something of an entirely different order. He connects it to an archetype of God and proceeds to an analysis that explains the dream in terms of a collective unconscious whose content is shared by groups of people rather than created by the individual alone.

Jung’s rhetorical strategy here is an argument proceeding from both example and analysis. The example is given in detail, along with enough background to make it useful to the reader. Then the example is narrated carefully, and its content is examined through a process of analysis familiar to those in psychiatry.

Some of the material in this selection is relatively challenging because Jung uses technical language and occasionally obscure references. However, the simplicity of the technique of narrative, telling a story of what happened, makes the selection intelligible, even though it deals with highly complex and controversial ideas.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Carl Jung's "The Personal and the Collective Unconscious." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What are some of the contents of the unconscious?
2. What is the difference between the personal and the collective unconscious?

From *The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung*. Translated by Cary F. Baynes.

The Personal and the Collective Unconscious

In Freud's view, as most people know, the contents of the unconscious are limited to infantile tendencies which are repressed because of their incompatible character. Repression is a process that begins in early childhood under the moral influence of the environment and lasts throughout life. Through analysis the repressions are removed and the repressed wishes made conscious.

According to this theory, the unconscious contains only those parts of the personality which could just as well be conscious and are in fact suppressed only through upbringing. Although from one point of view the infantile tendencies of the unconscious are the most conspicuous, it would nonetheless be incorrect to define or evaluate the unconscious entirely in these terms. The unconscious has still another side to it: it includes not only repressed contents, but also all psychic material that lies below the threshold of consciousness. It is impossible to explain the subliminal nature of all this material on the principle of repression; otherwise, through the removal of repressions, a man would acquire a phenomenal memory which would thenceforth forget nothing.

The unconscious has still another side to it: it includes not only repressed contents, but

also all psychic material that lies below the threshold of consciousness.

We therefore emphatically say that in addition to the repressed material the unconscious contains all those psychic components that have fallen below the threshold, including subliminal sense perceptions. Moreover we know, from abundant experience as well as for theoretical reasons, that the unconscious also contains components that have *not yet* reached the threshold of consciousness. These are the seeds of future conscious contents. Equally we have reason to suppose that the unconscious is never at rest in the sense of being inactive, but is continually engaged in grouping and regrouping its contents. Only in pathological cases can this activity be regarded as completely autonomous; normally it is coordinated with the conscious mind in a compensatory relationship.

It is to be assumed that all these contents are personal insofar as they are acquired during the individual's life. Since this life is limited, the number of acquired contents in the unconscious must also be limited. This being so, it might be thought possible to empty the unconscious either by analysis or by making a complete inventory of unconscious contents, on the ground that the unconscious cannot produce anything more than is already known and accepted in the conscious mind. We should also have to infer, as already indicated, that if one could stop the descent of conscious contents into the unconscious by doing away with

repression, unconscious productivity would be paralyzed. This is possible only to a very limited extent, as we know from experience. We urge our patients to hold fast to repressed contents that have been re-associated with consciousness, and to assimilate them into their plan of life. But this procedure, as we may daily convince ourselves, makes no impression on the unconscious, since it calmly continues to produce dreams and fantasies which, according to Freud's original theory, must arise from personal repressions. If in such cases we pursue our observations systematically and without prejudice, we shall find material which, although similar in form to the previous personal contents, yet seems to contain allusions that go far beyond the personal sphere.

Casting about in my mind for an example to illustrate what I have just said, I have a particularly vivid memory of a woman patient with a mild hysterical neurosis which, as we expressed it in those days, had its principal cause in a "father complex." By this we wanted to denote the fact that the patient's peculiar relationship to her father stood in her way. She had been on very good terms with her father, who had since died. It was a relationship chiefly of feeling. In such cases it is usually the intellectual function that is developed, and this later becomes the bridge to the world. Accordingly our patient became a student of philosophy. Her energetic pursuit of knowledge was motivated by her need to extricate herself from the emotional entanglement with her father. This operation may succeed if her feelings can find an outlet on the new intellectual level, perhaps in the formation of an emotional tie with a suitable man, equivalent to the former tie. In this

particular case, however, the transition refused to take place, because the patient's feelings remained suspended, oscillating between her father and a man who was not altogether suitable. The progress of her life was thus held up, and that inner disunity so characteristic of a neurosis promptly made its appearance. The so-called normal person would probably be able to break the emotional bond in one or the other direction by a powerful act of will, or else — and this is perhaps the more usual thing — he would come through the difficulty unconsciously, on the smooth path of instinct, without ever being aware of the sort of conflict that lay behind his headaches or other physical discomforts. But any weakness of instinct (which may have many causes) is enough to hinder a smooth unconscious transition. Then all progress is delayed by conflict, and the resulting stasis of life is equivalent to a neurosis. In consequence of the standstill, psychic energy flows off in every conceivable direction, apparently quite uselessly. For instance, there are excessive innervations of the sympathetic system, which lead to nervous disorders of the stomach and intestines; or the vagus (and consequently the heart) is stimulated; or fantasies and memories, uninteresting enough in themselves, become overvalued and prey on the conscious mind (mountains out of molehills). In this state a new motive is needed to put an end to the morbid suspension. Nature herself paves the way for this, unconsciously and indirectly, through the phenomenon of the transference (Freud). In the course of treatment the patient transfers the father imago¹ to the doctor, thus making him, in a sense, the father, and in the sense that he is *not* the father, also making him a substitute for the man she cannot reach. The doctor therefore becomes both a father and a

kind of lover — in other words, the object of conflict. In him the opposites are united, and for this reason he stands for a quasi-ideal solution of the conflict. Without in the least wishing it, he draws upon himself an overvaluation that is almost incredible to the outsider, for to the patient he seems like a savior or a god. This way of speaking is not altogether so laughable as it sounds. It is indeed a bit much to be a father and lover at once. Nobody could possibly stand up to it in the long run, precisely because it is too much of a good thing. One would have to be a demigod at least to sustain such a role without a break, for all the time one would have to be the giver. To the patient in the state of transference, this provisional solution naturally seems ideal, but only at first; in the end she comes to a standstill that is just as bad as the neurotic conflict was. Fundamentally, nothing has yet happened that might lead to a real solution. The conflict has merely been transferred. Nevertheless a successful transference can — at least temporarily — cause the whole neurosis to disappear, and for this reason it has been very rightly recognized by Freud as a healing factor of first-rate importance, but, at the same time, as a provisional state only, for although it holds out the possibility of a cure, it is far from being the cure itself.

This somewhat lengthy discussion seemed to me essential if my example was to be understood, for my patient had arrived at the state of transference and had already reached the upper limit where the standstill begins to make itself disagreeable. The question now arose: What next? I had of course become the complete savior, and the thought of having to give me up was not only exceedingly distasteful to the patient, but positively terrifying.

In such a situation “sound common sense” generally comes out with a whole repertory of admonitions: “you simply must,” “you really ought,” “you just cannot,” etc. So far as sound common sense is, happily, not too rare and not entirely without effect (pessimists, I know, exist), a rational motive can, in the exuberant feeling of health you get from transference, release so much enthusiasm that a painful sacrifice can be risked with a mighty effort of will. If successful — and these things sometimes are — the sacrifice bears blessed fruit, and the erstwhile patient leaps at one bound into the state of being practically cured. The doctor is generally so delighted that he fails to tackle the theoretical difficulties connected with this little miracle.

If the leap does not succeed — and it did not succeed with my patient — one is then faced with the problem of severing the transference. Here “psychoanalytic” theory shrouds itself in a thick darkness. Apparently we are to fall back on some nebulous trust in fate: somehow or other the matter will settle itself. “The transference stops automatically when the patient runs out of money,” as a slightly cynical colleague once remarked to me. Or the ineluctable demands of life make it impossible for the patient to linger on in the transference — demands which compel the involuntary sacrifice, sometimes with a more or less complete relapse as a result. (One may look in vain for accounts of such cases in the books that sing the praises of psychoanalysis!)

To be sure, there are hopeless cases where nothing helps; but there are also cases that do not get stuck and do not inevitably leave the transference situation with bitter hearts and sore heads.

I told myself, at this juncture with my patient, that there must be a clear and respectable way out of the impasse. My patient had long since run out of money — if indeed she ever possessed any — but I was curious to know what means nature would devise for a satisfactory way out of the transference deadlock. Since I never imagined that I was blessed with that “sound common sense” which always knows exactly what to do in every tangled situation, and since my patient knew as little as I, I suggested to her that we could at least keep an eye open for any movements coming from a sphere of the psyche uncontaminated by our superior wisdom and our conscious plannings. That meant first and foremost her dreams.

Dreams contain images and thought associations which we do not create with conscious intent. They arise spontaneously without our assistance and are representatives of a psychic activity withdrawn from our arbitrary will.

Dreams contain images and thought associations which we do not create with conscious intent. They arise spontaneously without our assistance and are representatives of a psychic activity withdrawn from our arbitrary will. Therefore the dream is, properly speaking, a highly objective, natural product of the psyche, from

which we might expect indications, or at least hints, about certain basic trends in the psychic process. Now, since the psychic process, like any other life process, is not just a causal sequence, but is also a process with a teleological orientation,² we might expect dreams to give us certain indicia about the objective causality as well as about the objective tendencies, because they are nothing less than self-portraits of the psychic life process.

On the basis of these reflections, then, we subjected the dreams to a careful examination. It would lead too far to quote word for word all the dreams that now followed. Let it suffice to sketch their main character: the majority referred to the person of the doctor, that is to say, the actors were unmistakably the dreamer herself and her doctor. The latter, however, seldom appeared in this natural shape, but was generally distorted in a remarkable way. Sometimes his figure was of supernatural size, sometimes he seemed to be extremely aged, then again he resembled her father, but was at the same time curiously woven into nature, as in the following dream: *Her father (who in reality was of small stature) was standing with her on a hill that was covered with wheat fields. She was quite tiny beside him, and he seemed to her like a giant. He lifted her up from the ground and held her in his arms like a little child. The wind swept over the wheat fields, and as the wheat swayed in the wind, he rocked her in his arms.*

From this dream and from others like it I could discern various things. Above all I got the impression that her unconscious was holding unshakably to the idea of my being the father-lover, so that the fatal tie we were trying to undo appeared to be doubly

strengthened. Moreover one could hardly avoid seeing that the unconscious placed a special emphasis on the supernatural, almost “divine” nature of the father-lover, thus accentuating still further the overvaluation occasioned by the transference. I therefore asked myself whether the patient had still not understood the wholly fantastic character of her transference, or whether perhaps the unconscious could never be reached by understanding at all, but must blindly and idiotically pursue some nonsensical chimera. Freud’s idea that the unconscious can “do nothing but wish,” Schopenhauer’s³ blind and aimless Will, the gnostic demi-urge who in his vanity deems himself perfect and then in the blindness of his limitation creates something lamentably imperfect — all these pessimistic suspicions of an essentially negative background to the world and the soul came threateningly near. And indeed there would be nothing to set against this except a well-meaning “you ought,” reinforced by a stroke of the ax that would cut down the whole phantasmagoria for good and all.

But as I turned the dreams over and over in my mind, there dawned on me another possibility. I said to myself: it cannot be denied that the dreams continue to speak in the same old metaphors with which our conversations have made both doctor and patient sickeningly familiar. But the patient has an undoubted understanding of her transference fantasy. She knows that I appear to her as a semidivine father-lover, and she can, at least intellectually, distinguish this from my factual reality. Therefore the dreams are obviously reiterating the conscious standpoint minus the conscious criticism, which they completely ignore. They

reiterate the conscious contents, not *in toto*, but insist on the fantastic standpoint as opposed to “sound common sense.”

I naturally asked myself what was the source of this obstinacy and what was its purpose? That it must have some purposive meaning I was convinced, for there is no truly living thing that does not have a final meaning, that can in other words be explained as a mere leftover from antecedent facts. But the energy of the transference is so strong that it gives one the impression of a vital instinct. That being so, what is the purpose of such fantasies? A careful examination and analysis of the dreams, especially of the one just quoted, revealed a very marked tendency — in contrast to conscious criticism, which always seeks to reduce things to human proportions — to endow the person of the doctor with superhuman attributes. He had to be gigantic, primordial, huger than the father, like the wind that sweeps over the earth — was he then to be made into a god? Or, I said to myself, was it rather the case that the unconscious was trying to *create* a god out of the person of the doctor, as it were to free a vision of God from the veils of the personal, so that the transference to the person of the doctor was no more than a misunderstanding on the part of the conscious mind, a stupid trick played by “sound common sense”? Was the urge of the unconscious perhaps only apparently reaching out towards the person, but in a deeper sense towards a god? Could the longing for a god be a *passion* welling up from our darkest, instinctual nature, a passion unswayed by any outside influences, deeper and stronger perhaps than the love for a human person? Or was it perhaps the highest and truest meaning of that inappropriate love we call transference, a little bit of real

Gottesminne,⁴ that has been lost to consciousness ever since the fifteenth century?

No one will doubt the reality of a passionate longing for a human person; but that a fragment of religious psychology, a historical anachronism, indeed something of a medieval curiosity — we are reminded of Mechtild of Magdeburg⁵ — should come to light as an immediate living reality in the middle of the consulting room, and be expressed in the prosaic figure of the doctor, seems almost too fantastic to be taken seriously.

A genuinely scientific attitude must be unprejudiced. The sole criterion for the validity of a hypothesis is whether or not it possesses a heuristic — i.e., explanatory — value. The question now is, can we regard the possibilities set forth above as a valid hypothesis? There is no a priori⁶ reason why it should not be just as possible that the unconscious tendencies have a goal beyond the human person, as that the unconscious can “do nothing but wish.” Experience alone can decide which is the more suitable hypothesis.

This new hypothesis was not entirely plausible to my very critical patient. The earlier view that I was the father-lover, and as such presented an ideal solution of the conflict, was incomparably more attractive to her way of feeling. Nevertheless her intellect was sufficiently clear to appreciate the theoretical possibility of the new hypothesis. Meanwhile the dreams continued to disintegrate the person of the doctor and swell them to ever vaster proportions. Concurrently with this there now occurred something which at first

I alone perceived, and with the utmost astonishment, namely a kind of subterranean undermining of the transference. Her relations with a certain friend deepened perceptibly, notwithstanding the fact that consciously she still clung to the transference. So that when the time came for leaving me, it was no catastrophe, but a perfectly reasonable parting. I had the privilege of being the only witness during the process of severance. I saw how the transpersonal control point developed — I cannot call it anything else — a *guiding function* and step by step gathered to itself all the former personal overvaluations; how, with this afflux of energy, it gained influence over the resisting conscious mind without the patient's consciously noticing what was happening. From this I realized that the dreams were not just fantasies, but self-representations of unconscious developments which allowed the psyche of the patient gradually to grow out of the pointless personal tie.

These ancient images are restored to life by the primitive, analogical mode of thinking peculiar to dreams. It is not a question of inherited ideas, but of inherited thought patterns.

This change took place, as I showed, through the unconscious development of a transpersonal control point; a virtual goal, as it were, that expressed itself symbolically in a form which can only

be described as a vision of God. The dreams swelled the human person of the doctor to superhuman proportions, making him a gigantic primordial father who is at the same time the wind, and in whose protecting arms the dreamer rests like an infant. If we try to make the patient's conscious, and traditionally Christian, idea of God responsible for the divine image in the dreams, we would still have to lay stress on the distortion. In religious matters the patient had a critical and agnostic attitude, and her idea of a possible deity had long since passed into the realm of the inconceivable, i.e., had dwindled into a complete abstraction. In contrast to this, the god-image of the dreams corresponded to the archaic conception of a nature demon, something like Wotan.⁷ *Theos to pneûma*, "God is spirit," is here translated back into its original form where *pneûma* means "wind": God is the wind, stronger and mightier than man, an invisible breath-spirit. As in the Hebrew *ruach*, so in Arabic *ruh* means breath and spirit. Out of the purely personal form the dreams developed an archaic god-image that is infinitely far from the conscious idea of God. It might be objected that this is simply an infantile image, a childhood memory. I would have no quarrel with this assumption if we were dealing with an old man sitting on a golden throne in heaven. But there is no trace of any sentimentality of that kind; instead, we have a primitive conception that can correspond only to an archaic mentality. These primitive conceptions, of which I have given a large number of examples in my *Symbols of Transformation*, tempt one to make, in regard to unconscious material, a distinction very different from that between "preconscious" and "unconscious" or "subconscious" and "unconscious." The justification for these distinctions need not be discussed here. They have a definite value and are worth

refining further as points of view. The fundamental distinction which experience has forced upon me merely claims the value of a further point of view. From what has been said it is clear that we have to distinguish in the unconscious a layer which we may call the *personal unconscious*. The materials contained in this layer are of a personal nature insofar as they have the character partly of acquisitions derived from the individual's life and partly of psychological factors which could just as well be conscious. It is readily understandable that incompatible psychological elements are liable to repression and therefore become unconscious; but on the other hand we also have the possibility of making and keeping the repressed contents conscious, once they have been recognized. We recognize them as personal contents because we can discover their effects, or their partial manifestation, or their specific origin in our personal past. They are the integral components of the personality, they belong to its inventory, and their loss to consciousness produces an inferiority in one or the other respect — an inferiority, moreover, that has the psychological character not so much of an organic mutilation or an inborn defect as of a want which gives rise to a feeling of moral resentment. The sense of moral inferiority always indicates that the missing element is something which, one feels, should not be missing, or which could be made conscious if only one took enough trouble. The feeling of moral inferiority does not come from a collision with the generally accepted and, in a sense, arbitrary moral law, but from the conflict with one's own self which, for reasons of psychic equilibrium, demands that the deficit be redressed. Whenever a sense of moral inferiority appears, it shows that there is not only the demand to assimilate an

unconscious component, but also the possibility of assimilating it. In the last resort it is a man's moral qualities which force him, either through direct recognition of the necessity to do so, or indirectly through a painful neurosis, to assimilate his unconscious self and to keep himself fully conscious. Whoever progresses along this road of realizing the unconscious self must inevitably bring into consciousness the contents of the personal unconscious, thus widening the scope of his personality. I should add at once that this "widening" primarily concerns the moral consciousness, one's self-knowledge, for the unconscious contents that are released and brought into consciousness by analysis are usually unpleasant — which is precisely why these wishes, memories, tendencies, plans, etc. were repressed. These are the contents that are brought to light in much the same way by a thorough confession, though to a much more limited extent. The rest comes out as a rule in dream analysis. It is often very interesting to watch how the dreams fetch up the essential points, bit by bit and with the nicest choice. The total material that is added to consciousness causes a considerable widening of the horizon, a deepened self-knowledge which, more than anything else, is calculated to humanize a man and make him modest. But even self-knowledge, assumed by all wise men to be the best and most efficacious, has different effects on different characters. We make very remarkable discoveries in this respect in practical analysis, ...

As my example of the archaic idea of God shows, the unconscious seems to contain other things besides personal acquisitions and belongings. My patient was quite unconscious of

the derivation of “spirit” from “wind,” or of the parallelism between the two. This content was not the product of her thinking, nor had she ever been taught it. The critical passage in the New Testament was inaccessible to her — *to pneûma pneî hopou thelei*⁸ — since she knew no Greek. If we must take it as a wholly personal acquisition, it might be a case of so-called cryptomnesia,⁹ the unconscious recollection of a thought which the dreamer had once read somewhere. I have nothing against such a possibility in this particular case; but I have seen a sufficient number of other cases — many of them are to be found in the book mentioned above — where cryptomnesia can be excluded with certainty. Even if it were a case of cryptomnesia, which seems to me very improbable, we should still have to explain what the predisposition was that caused just this image to be retained and later, as Semon puts it, “ecphorated” (*ekphoreîn*, Latin *efferre*, “to produce”). In any case, cryptomnesia or no cryptomnesia, we are dealing with a genuine and thoroughly primitive god image that grew up in the unconscious of a civilized person and produced a living effect — an effect which might well give the psychologist of religion food for reflection. There is nothing about this image that could be called personal: it is a wholly collective image, the ethnic origin of which has long been known to us. Here is a historical image of worldwide distribution that has come into existence again through a natural psychic function. This is not so very surprising, since my patient was born into the world with a human brain which presumably still functions today much as it did of old. We are dealing with a reactivated archetype, as I have elsewhere called these primordial images. These ancient images are restored to life by the primitive,

analogical mode of thinking peculiar to dreams. It is not a question of inherited ideas, but of inherited thought patterns.

In view of these facts we must assume that the unconscious contains not only personal, but also impersonal, collective components in the form of inherited categories or archetypes. I have therefore advanced the hypothesis that at its deeper levels the unconscious possesses collective contents in a relatively active state. That is why I speak of the collective unconscious.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What is Jung's view of the relationship of the unconscious mind to the conscious mind? How does it compare to Freud's?
2. What is repression? Why does repression work as it does?
3. How does transference work in psychoanalytic treatment? Is it a good thing or not?
4. What is unusual about Jung's patient's dream? What about it can he not fit into a normal pattern of transference?
5. What is the distinction between the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious?
6. Do you agree that "Dreams contain images and thought associations which we do not create with conscious intent" ([para. 9](#))? Why or why not?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Jung talks about common sense and its limitations. For some people, common sense denies the existence of an unconscious mind. Relying on Jung, your own personal experiences, and any other sources you

choose, defend the existence of an unconscious mind. At the same time, do your best to explain the content of the unconscious and why it is important to the individual.

2. With reference to your own dreams, argue for or against the belief that dreams are products of the conscious mind. Have you had dreams whose content did not pass the “threshold” of your conscious mind?
3. Although the adult Jung was not religious, as the son of a Swiss pastor he was well acquainted with religion. In [paragraph 13](#), Jung asserts that his patient’s dream reveals a fundamental human longing for God. As he puts it, “Could the longing for a god be a *passion* welling up from our darkest, instinctual nature?” Examine the possibility that such a psychological phenomenon has affected your attitude toward religion and religious belief.
4. Jung suggests that mythic literature maintains some of the images that make up the collective unconscious of a group of people. Select a myth (consult Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*, Grimm’s fairy tales, or the Greek myths, or choose a pattern of mythic behavior repeated in popular films) and analyze the instinctual longing it represents for us. What does the myth reveal about our culture?

CONNECTIONS

1. Jung was a follower of Freud until he eventually broke from him. The break was not altogether friendly, and the feelings between the two — on professional matters — were often strained. Compare Jung’s approach to the subject of the unconscious with [Freud’s](#). In what respects do they differ? In what ways are their methods either compatible or incompatible with each other? Do you find Jung’s methods more or less useful than Freud’s? Explain why.
2. In “[Natural Selection](#)”, Charles Darwin suggests that as humans developed over a long period of time they may have continued many traditions that began early in history. How would Darwin’s ideas help reinforce the concept of an unconscious that transcends the ages and

thus becomes part of our collective memory gathered through eons of evolution? Would Jung have found Darwin's ideas congenial, or would he have discounted them? Does he show any evidence of having been influenced by Darwin? Explain.



Virginia Woolf *Shakespeare's Sister*



AP Images

VIRGINIA WOOLF (1882–1941), one of the most gifted of the modernist writers, was a prolific essayist and novelist in what came to be known as the Bloomsbury group, named after a section of London near the British Museum. Most members of the group were writers, such as E. M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, and the critic Clive Bell, and some were artists, such as Duncan Grant

and Virginia Woolf's sister, Vanessa Bell. The eminent economist John Maynard Keynes was part of the group as well, along with a variety of other accomplished intellectuals.

Virginia Woolf published some of the most important works of the early twentieth century, including the novels *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando* (1928), and *The Waves* (1931). Among her many volumes of nonfiction prose is *A Room of One's Own* (1929). In this book Woolf speculates on what life would have been like for an imaginary gifted sister of William Shakespeare.

In discussing the imaginary Judith Shakespeare, Woolf examines the circumstances common to women's lives during the Renaissance. For example, women had little or no say in their future. Unlike their male counterparts, they were not educated in grammar schools and did not learn trades that would enable them to make a living for themselves. Instead, they were expected to marry as soon as possible, even as young as thirteen or fourteen years of age, and begin raising a family of their own. When they did marry, their husbands were men selected by their parents; the wives essentially became the property of those men. Under English law a married couple was regarded as one entity, and that entity was spoken for only by the man. Similarly, the women of the period had few civil rights. As Woolf points out, the history books do not mention women very often, and when they do, it is usually to relate that wife beating was common and generally approved of in all classes of society.

As Woolf comments on the opportunities that women were denied during the Renaissance, she agrees with an unnamed bishop who said that no woman could have written Shakespeare's plays. Woolf explains that no woman could have had enough contact with the theater in those days to be received with anything but disdain and discourtesy. Women could not even act on stage in Shakespeare's time, much less write for it.

It would be all but impossible in a society of this sort to imagine a woman as a successful literary figure, much less as a popular playwright. After all, society excluded women, marginalizing them as insignificant — at least in the eyes of historians. Certainly women were mothers; as such, they bore the male children who went on to become accomplished and famous. However, without a trade or an education, women in Shakespeare's time were all but chattel slaves in a household.

In this setting, Woolf places a brilliant girl named Judith Shakespeare, a fictional character who, in Woolf's imaginative construction, had the same literary fire as her famous brother. How would she have tried to express herself? How would she have followed her talent? Woolf suggests the results would have been depressing, and for good reason. No one would have listened to Judith; in all likelihood her life would have ended badly.

The women of Shakespeare's time mentioned in the history books are generally Elizabeths and Marys, queens and princesses whose power was inherent in their positions. Little is known, Woolf says, about the lives of ordinary middle-class women. In Woolf's

time, historians were uninterested in such information. However, many recent books have included detailed research into the lives of people in the Elizabethan period. Studying journals, day-books (including budgets and planning), and family records, modern historians have found much more information than English historian George Trevelyan (to whom Woolf refers in her essay) drew on. In fact, it is now known that women's lives were more varied than even Woolf implies, but women still had precious few opportunities compared to men of the period.

WOOLF'S RHETORIC

This selection is the third chapter from *A Room of One's Own*; thus, it begins with a sentence that implies continuity with an earlier section. The context for the essay's opening is as follows: A male dinner guest has said something insulting to women at a dinner party, and Woolf wishes she could come back with some hard fact to contradict the insult. However, she has no hard fact, so her strategy is to construct a situation that is as plausible and as accurate as her knowledge of history permits. Lacking fact, the novelist Virginia Woolf relies on imagination.

As it turned out, Woolf's portrait of Judith Shakespeare is so vivid that many readers actually believed William Shakespeare had such a sister. Judith Shakespeare did not exist, however. Her fictional character enables Woolf to speculate on how the life of any talented woman would have developed given the circumstances and limitations imposed on all women at the time.

In the process, Woolf tries to reconstruct the world of Elizabethan England and place Judith in it.

Woolf goes about this act of imagination with extraordinary deliberateness. Her tone is cool and detached, almost as if she were a historian herself. She rarely reveals contempt for the opinions of men who are dismissive of women, such as the unnamed bishop. Yet, we catch an edgy tone when she discusses his views on women in literature. On the other hand, when she turns to Mr. Oscar Browning, a professor who believed the best women in Oxford were inferior to the worst men, we see another side of Woolf. She reveals that after making his high-minded pronouncements, Mr. Browning returned to his quarters for an assignation with an illiterate stable boy. This detail is meant to reveal the true intellectual level of Mr. Browning, as well as his attitude toward women.

Woolf makes careful use of simile in such statements as “for fiction, imaginative work that is, is not dropped like a pebble upon the ground, as science may be; fiction is like a spider’s web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners” ([para. 2](#)). Later, she shows a highly efficient use of language: “to write a work of genius is almost always a feat of prodigious difficulty.... Dogs will bark; people will interrupt; money must be made; health will break down” ([para. 11](#)). For a woman — who would not even have had a room of her own in an Elizabethan household — the impediments to creating “a work of genius” were insurmountable.

One reason for Woolf's controlled and cool tone is that she wrote with the knowledge that most men were very conservative. In 1929, people would not read what she wrote if she became enraged on paper. They would turn the page and ignore her argument. Thus, her tone seems inviting and cautious, almost as if Woolf is portraying herself as conservative on women's issues and in agreement with men like the historian Trevelyan and the unnamed bishop. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Woolf's anger may seethe and rage beneath the surface, but she keeps the surface smooth enough for those who disagree with her to be lured on to read.

One of the interesting details of Woolf's style is her allusiveness. She alludes to the work of many writers — male writers such as John Keats; Alfred, Lord Tennyson; and Robert Burns; and female writers such as Jane Austen, Emily Brontë, and George Eliot. Woolf's range of reference is that of the highly literary person — which she was; yet the way she makes reference to other important writers is designed not to offend the reader. If the reader knows the references, then Woolf will communicate on a special shared level of understanding. If the reader does not know the references, there is nothing in Woolf's manner that makes it difficult for the reader to continue and understand her main points.

Woolf's rhetoric in this piece is singularly polite. She makes her points without rancor and alarm. They are detailed, specific, and in many ways irrefutable. What she feels she has done is nothing less than tell the truth.

■ ■ PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Virginia Woolf's "Shakespeare's Sister." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What was the expected role of women in Shakespeare's time?
2. By what means could Shakespeare's imaginary sister have become a dramatist?

From *A Room of One's Own*.

Shakespeare's Sister

It was disappointing not to have brought back in the evening some important statement, some authentic fact. Women are poorer than men because — this or that. Perhaps now it would be better to give up seeking for the truth, and receiving on one's head an avalanche of opinion hot as lava, discolored as dish-water. It would be better to draw the curtains; to shut out distractions; to light the lamp; to narrow the enquiry and to ask the historian, who records not opinions but facts, to describe under what conditions women lived, not throughout the ages, but in England, say in the time of Elizabeth.

For it is a perennial puzzle why no woman wrote a word of that extraordinary literature when every other man, it seemed, was capable of song or sonnet. What were the conditions in which women lived, I asked myself; for fiction, imaginative work that is, is not dropped like a pebble upon the ground, as science may be; fiction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners. Often the attachment is scarcely perceptible; Shakespeare's plays, for instance, seem to hang there complete by themselves. But when the web is pulled askew, hooked up at the edge, torn in the middle, one remembers that these webs are not spun in midair by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of suffering human beings, and are attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in.

I went, therefore, to the shelf where the histories stand and took down one of the latest, Professor Trevelyan's¹ *History of England*. Once more I looked up Women, found "position of," and turned to the pages indicated. "Wife-beating," I read, "was a recognized right of man, and was practiced without shame by high as well as low.... Similarly," the historian goes on, "the daughter who refused to marry the gentleman of her parents' choice was liable to be locked up, beaten, and flung about the room, without any shock being inflicted on public opinion. Marriage was not an affair of personal affection, but of family avarice, particularly in the 'chivalrous' upper classes.... Betrothal often took place while one or both of the parties was in the cradle, and marriage when they were scarcely out of the nurses' charge." That was about 1470, soon after Chaucer's time. The next reference to the position of women is some two hundred years later, in the time of the Stuarts. "It was still the exception for women of the upper and middle class to choose their own husbands, and when the husband had been assigned, he was lord and master, so far at least as law and custom could make him. Yet even so," Professor Trevelyan concludes, "neither Shakespeare's women nor those of authentic seventeenth-century memoirs, like the Verneys and the Hutchinsons, seem wanting in personality and character." Certainly, if we consider it, Cleopatra must have had a way with her; Lady Macbeth, one would suppose, had a will of her own; Rosalind, one might conclude, was an attractive girl. Professor Trevelyan is speaking no more than the truth when he remarks that Shakespeare's women do not seem wanting in personality and character. Not being a historian, one might go even further and say that women have burnt like beacons in all the works of all

the poets from the beginning of time — Clytemnestra, Antigone, Cleopatra, Lady Macbeth, Phèdre, Cressida, Rosalind, Desdemona, the Duchess of Malfi, among the dramatists; then among the prose writers: Millamant, Clarissa, Becky Sharp, Anna Karenina, Emma Bovary, Madame de Guermantes — the names flock to mind, nor do they recall women “lacking in personality and character.” Indeed, if woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of the utmost importance; very various; heroic and mean; splendid and sordid; infinitely beautiful and hideous in the extreme; as great as a man, some think even greater.² But this is woman in fiction. In fact, as Professor Trevelyan points out, she was locked up, beaten, and flung about the room.

A very queer, composite being thus emerges. Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband.

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It was certainly an odd monster that one made up by reading the historians first and the poets afterwards — a worm winged like an eagle; the spirit of life and beauty in a kitchen chopping up suet. But these monsters, however amusing to the imagination, have no existence in fact. What one must do to bring her to life was to think poetically and prosaically at one and the same moment, thus keeping in touch with fact — that she is Mrs. Martin, aged thirty-six, dressed in blue, wearing a black hat and brown shoes; but not losing sight of fiction either — that she is a vessel in which all sorts of spirits and forces are coursing and flashing perpetually. The moment, however, that one tries this method with the Elizabethan woman, one branch of illumination fails; one is held up by the scarcity of facts. One knows nothing detailed, nothing perfectly true and substantial about her. History scarcely mentions her. And I turned to Professor Trevelyan again to see what history meant to him. I found by looking at his chapter headings that it meant —

“The Manor Court and the Methods of Open-field Agriculture ...
The Cistercians and Sheep-farming ... The Crusades ... The
University ... The House of Commons ... The Hundred Years’ War
... The Wars of the Roses ... The Renaissance Scholars ... The

Dissolution of the Monasteries ... Agrarian and Religious Strife ... The Origin of English Sea-power ... The Armada ..." and so on. Occasionally an individual woman is mentioned, an Elizabeth, or a Mary; a queen or a great lady. But by no possible means could middle-class women with nothing but brains and character at their command have taken part in any one of the great movements which, brought together, constitute the historian's view of the past. Nor shall we find her in any collection of anecdotes. Aubrey³ hardly mentions her. She never writes her own life and scarcely keeps a diary; there are only a handful of her letters in existence. She left no plays or poems by which we can judge her. What one wants, I thought — and why does not some brilliant student at Newnham or Girton⁴ supply it? — is a mass of information; at what age did she marry; how many children had she as a rule; what was her house like; had she a room to herself; did she do the cooking; would she be likely to have a servant? All these facts lie somewhere, presumably, in parish registers and account books; the life of the average Elizabethan woman must be scattered about somewhere, could one collect it and make a book of it. It would be ambitious beyond my daring, I thought, looking about the shelves for books that were not there, to suggest to the students of those famous colleges that they should rewrite history, though I own that it often seems a little queer as it is, unreal, lopsided; but why should they not add a supplement to history? calling it, of course, by some inconspicuous name so that women might figure there without impropriety? For one often catches a glimpse of them in the lives of the great, whisking away into the background, concealing, I sometimes think, a wink, a laugh, perhaps a tear. And, after all, we have lives enough of Jane

Austen; it scarcely seems necessary to consider again the influence of the tragedies of Joanna Baillie upon the poetry of Edgar Allan Poe; as for myself, I should not mind if the homes and haunts of Mary Russell Mitford were closed to the public for a century at least. But what I find deplorable, I continued, looking about the bookshelves again, is that nothing is known about women before the eighteenth century. I have no model in my mind to turn about this way and that. Here am I asking why women did not write poetry in the Elizabethan age, and I am not sure how they were educated; whether they were taught to write; whether they had sitting-rooms to themselves; how many women had children before they were twenty-one; what, in short, they did from eight in the morning till eight at night. They had no money evidently; according to Professor Trevelyan they were married whether they liked it or not before they were out of the nursery, at fifteen or sixteen very likely. It would have been extremely odd, even upon this showing, had one of them suddenly written the plays of Shakespeare, I concluded, and I thought of that old gentleman, who is dead now, but was a bishop, I think, who declared that it was impossible for any woman, past, present, or to come, to have the genius of Shakespeare. He wrote to the papers about it. He also told a lady who applied to him for information that cats do not as a matter of fact go to heaven, though they have, he added, souls of a sort. How much thinking those old gentlemen used to save one! How the borders of ignorance shrank back at their approach! Cats do not go to heaven. Women cannot write the plays of Shakespeare.

[I]t would have been impossible, completely and entirely, for any woman to have written the plays of Shakespeare in the age of Shakespeare.

Be that as it may, I could not help thinking, as I looked at the works of Shakespeare on the shelf, that the bishop was right at least in this; it would have been impossible, completely and entirely, for any woman to have written the plays of Shakespeare in the age of Shakespeare. Let me imagine, since facts are so hard to come by, what would have happened had Shakespeare had a wonderfully gifted sister, called Judith, let us say.

Shakespeare himself went, very probably — his mother was an heiress — to the grammar school, where he may have learnt Latin — Ovid, Virgil, and Horace — and the elements of grammar and logic. He was, it is well known, a wild boy who poached rabbits, perhaps shot a deer, and had, rather sooner than he should have done, to marry a woman in the neighborhood, who bore him a child rather quicker than was right. That escapade sent him to seek his fortune in London. He had, it seemed, a taste for the theatre; he began by holding horses at the stage door. Very soon he got work in the theatre, became a successful actor, and lived at the hub of the universe, meeting everybody, knowing everybody, practicing his art on the boards, exercising his wits in the streets, and even getting access to the palace of the queen. Meanwhile his extraordinarily gifted sister, let us suppose, remained at home.

She was as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school. She had no chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of reading Horace and Virgil. She picked up a book now and then, one of her brother's perhaps, and read a few pages. But then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers. They would have spoken sharply but kindly, for they were substantial people who knew the conditions of life for a woman and loved their daughter — indeed, more likely than not she was the apple of her father's eye. Perhaps she scribbled some pages up in an apple loft on the sly, but was careful to hide them or set fire to them. Soon, however, before she was out of her teens, she was to be betrothed to the son of a neighboring wool-stapler. She cried out that marriage was hateful to her, and for that she was severely beaten by her father. Then he ceased to scold her. He begged her instead not to hurt him, not to shame him in this matter of her marriage. He would give her a chain of beads or a fine petticoat, he said; and there were tears in his eyes. How could she disobey him? How could she break his heart? The force of her own gift alone drove her to it. She made up a small parcel of her belongings, let herself down by a rope one summer's night and took the road to London. She was not seventeen. The birds that sang in the hedge were not more musical than she was. She had the quickest fancy, a gift like her brother's, for the tune of words. Like him, she had a taste for the theatre. She stood at the stage door; she wanted to act, she said. Men laughed in her face. The manager — a fat, loose-lipped man — guffawed. He bellowed something about poodles dancing and women acting — no woman, he said, could possibly be an

actress. He hinted — you can imagine what. She could get no training in her craft. Could she even seek her dinner in a tavern or roam the streets at midnight? Yet her genius was for fiction and lusted to feed abundantly upon the lives of men and women and the study of their ways. At last — for she was very young, oddly like Shakespeare the poet in her face, with the same grey eyes and rounded brows — at last Nick Greene, the actor-manager took pity on her; she found herself with child by that gentleman and so — who shall measure the heat and violence of the poet's heart when caught and tangled in a woman's body? — killed herself one winter's night and lies buried at some cross-roads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle.⁵

That, more or less, is how the story would run, I think, if a woman in Shakespeare's day had had Shakespeare's genius. But for my part, I agree with the deceased bishop, if such he was — it is unthinkable that any woman in Shakespeare's day should have had Shakespeare's genius. For genius like Shakespeare's is not born among laboring, uneducated, servile people. It was not born in England among the Saxons and the Britons. It is not born today among the working classes. How, then, could it have been born among women whose work began, according to Professor Trevelyan, almost before they were out of the nursery, who were forced to it by their parents and held to it by all the power of law and custom? Yet genius of a sort must have existed among women as it must have existed among the working classes. Now and again an Emily Brontë or a Robert Burns⁶ blazes out and proves its presence. But certainly it never got itself on to paper. When, however, one reads of a witch being ducked, of a woman

possessed by devils, of a wise woman selling herbs, or even of a very remarkable man who had a mother, then, I think we are on the track of a lost novelist, a suppressed poet, of some mute and inglorious Jane Austen, some Emily Brontë who dashed her brains out on the moor or mopped and mowed about the highways crazed with the torture that her gift had put her to. Indeed, I would venture to guess that Anon, who wrote so many poems without signing them, was often a woman. It was a woman Edward Fitzgerald,⁷ I think, suggested who made the ballads and the folk-songs, crooning them to her children, beguiling her spinning with them, or the length of the winter's night.

This may be true or it may be false — who can say? — but what is true in it, so it seemed to me, reviewing the story of Shakespeare's sister as I had made it, is that any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked at. For it needs little skill in psychology to be sure that a highly gifted girl who had tried to use her gift for poetry would have been so thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty. No girl could have walked to London and stood at a stage door and forced her way into the presence of actor-managers without doing herself a violence and suffering an anguish which may have been irrational — for chastity may be a fetish invented by certain societies for unknown reasons — but were none the less inevitable. Chastity had then, it has even now, a religious importance in a woman's life, and has

so wrapped itself round with nerves and instincts that to cut it free and bring it to the light of day demands courage of the rarest. To have lived a free life in London in the sixteenth century would have meant for a woman who was poet and playwright a nervous stress and dilemma which might well have killed her. Had she survived, whatever she had written would have been twisted and deformed, issuing from a strained and morbid imagination. And undoubtedly, I thought, looking at the shelf where there are no plays by women, her work would have gone unsigned. That refuge she would have sought certainly. It was the relic of the sense of chastity that dictated anonymity to women even so late as the nineteenth century. Currer Bell, George Eliot, George Sand,⁸ all the victims of inner strife as their writings prove, sought ineffectively to veil themselves by using the name of a man. Thus they did homage to the convention, which if not implanted by the other sex was liberally encouraged by them (the chief glory of a woman is not to be talked of, said Pericles, himself a much-talked-of man), that publicity in women is detestable. Anonymity runs in their blood. The desire to be veiled still possesses them. They are not even now as concerned about the health of their fame as men are, and, speaking generally, will pass a tombstone or a signpost without feeling an irresistible desire to cut their names on it, as Alf, Bert, or Chas. must do in obedience to their instinct, which murmurs if it sees a fine woman go by, or even a dog, *Ce chien est à moi.*⁹ And, of course, it may not be a dog, I thought, remembering Parliament Square, the Sieges Allee and other avenues; it may be a piece of land or a man with curly black hair. It is one of the great advantages of being a woman that one can

pass even a very fine negress without wishing to make an Englishwoman of her.

That woman, then, who was born with a gift of poetry in the sixteenth century, was an unhappy woman, a woman at strife against herself.

That woman, then, who was born with a gift of poetry in the sixteenth century, was an unhappy woman, a woman at strife against herself. All the conditions of her life, all her own instincts, were hostile to the state of mind which is needed to set free whatever is in the brain. But what is the state of mind that is most propitious to the act of creation, I asked. Can one come by any notion of the state that furthers and makes possible that strange activity? Here I opened the volume containing the Tragedies of Shakespeare. What was Shakespeare's state of mind, for instance, when he wrote *Lear* and *Antony and Cleopatra*? It was certainly the state of mind most favorable to poetry that there has ever existed. But Shakespeare himself said nothing about it. We only know casually and by chance that he "never blotted a line." Nothing indeed was ever said by the artist himself about his state of mind until the eighteenth century perhaps. Rousseau perhaps began it. At any rate, by the nineteenth century self-consciousness had developed so far that it was the habit for men of letters to describe their minds in confessions and

autobiographies. Their lives also were written, and their letters were printed after their deaths. Thus, though we do not know what Shakespeare went through when he wrote *Lear*, we do know what Carlyle went through when he wrote the *French Revolution*; what Flaubert went through when he wrote *Madame Bovary*; what Keats¹⁰ was going through when he tried to write poetry against the coming of death and the indifference of the world.

And one gathers from this enormous modern literature of confession and self-analysis that to write a work of genius is almost always a feat of prodigious difficulty. Everything is against the likelihood that it will come from the writer's mind whole and entire. Generally material circumstances are against it. Dogs will bark; people will interrupt; money must be made; health will break down. Further, accentuating all these difficulties and making them harder to bear is the world's notorious indifference. It does not ask people to write poems and novels and histories; it does not need them. It does not care whether Flaubert finds the right word or whether Carlyle scrupulously verifies this or that fact. Naturally, it will not pay for what it does not want. And so the writer, Keats, Flaubert, Carlyle, suffers, especially in the creative years of youth, every form of distraction and discouragement. A curse, a cry of agony, rises from those books of analysis and confession. "Mighty poets in their misery dead" — that is the burden of their song. If anything comes through in spite of all this, it is a miracle, and probably no book is born entire and uncrippled as it was conceived.

But for women, I thought, looking at the empty shelves, these difficulties were infinitely more formidable. In the first place, to have a room of her own, let alone a quiet room or a sound-proof room, was out of the question, unless her parents were exceptionally rich or very noble, even up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Since her pin money, which depended on the goodwill of her father, was only enough to keep her clothed, she was debarred from such alleviations as came even to Keats or Tennyson or Carlyle, all poor men, from a walking tour, a little journey to France, from the separate lodging which, even if it were miserable enough, sheltered them from the claims and tyrannies of their families. Such material difficulties were formidable; but much worse were the immaterial. The indifference of the world which Keats and Flaubert and other men of genius have found so hard to bear was in her case not indifference but hostility. The world did not say to her as it said to them, Write if you choose; it makes no difference to me. The world said with a guffaw, Write? What's the good of your writing? Here the psychologists of Newnham and Girton might come to our help, I thought, looking again at the blank spaces on the shelves. For surely it is time that the effect of discouragement upon the mind of the artist should be measured, as I have seen a dairy company measure the effect of ordinary milk and Grade A milk upon the body of the rat. They set two rats in cages side by side, and of the two one was furtive, timid, and small, and the other was glossy, bold, and big. Now what food do we feed women as artists upon? I asked, remembering, I suppose, that dinner of prunes and custard. To answer that question I had only to open the evening paper and to read that Lord Birkenhead is of opinion — but really I am not

going to trouble to copy our Lord Birkenhead's opinion upon the writing of women. What Dean Inge says I will leave in peace. The Harley Street specialist may be allowed to rouse the echoes of Harley Street with his vociferations without raising a hair on my head. I will quote, however, Mr. Oscar Browning, because Mr. Oscar Browning was a great figure in Cambridge at one time, and used to examine the students at Girton and Newnham. Mr. Oscar Browning was wont to declare "that the impression left on his mind, after looking over any set of examination papers, was that, irrespective of the marks he might give, the best woman was intellectually the inferior of the worst man." After saying that Mr. Browning went back to his rooms — and it is this sequel that endears him and makes him a human figure of some bulk and majesty — he went back to his rooms and found a stable-boy lying on the sofa — "a mere skeleton, his cheeks were cavernous and sallow, his teeth were black, and he did not appear to have the full use of his limbs.... 'That's Arthur' [said Mr. Browning]. 'He's a dear boy really and most high-minded.'" The two pictures always seem to me to complete each other. And happily in this age of biography the two pictures often do complete each other, so that we are able to interpret the opinions of great men not only by what they say, but by what they do.

But though this is possible now, such opinions coming from the lips of important people must have been formidable enough even fifty years ago. Let us suppose that a father from the highest motives did not wish his daughter to leave home and become writer, painter, or scholar. "See what Mr. Oscar Browning says," he would say; and there was not only Mr. Oscar Browning; there was

the *Saturday Review*; there was Mr. Greg — the “essentials of a woman’s being,” said Mr. Greg emphatically, “are that *they are supported by, and they minister to, men*” — there was an enormous body of masculine opinion to the effect that nothing could be expected of women intellectually. Even if her father did not read out loud these opinions, any girl could read them for herself; and the reading, even in the nineteenth century, must have lowered her vitality, and told profoundly upon her work. There would always have been that assertion — you cannot do this, you are incapable of doing that — to protest against, to overcome. Probably for a novelist this germ is no longer of much effect; for there have been women novelists of merit. But for painters it must still have some sting in it; and for musicians, I imagine, is even now active and poisonous in the extreme. The woman composer stands where the actress stood in the time of Shakespeare. Nick Greene, I thought, remembering the story I had made about Shakespeare’s sister, said that a woman acting put him in mind of a dog dancing. Johnson repeated the phrase two hundred years later of women preaching. And here, I said, opening a book about music, we have the very words used again in this year of grace, 1928, of women who try to write music. “Of Mlle. Germaine Tailleferre one can only repeat Dr. Johnson’s dictum concerning a woman preacher, transposed into terms of music. ‘Sir, a woman’s composing is like a dog’s walking on his hind legs. It is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all.’ ”¹¹ So accurately does history repeat itself.

Thus, I concluded, shutting Mr. Oscar Browning’s life and pushing away the rest, it is fairly evident that even in the nineteenth

century a woman was not encouraged to be an artist. On the contrary, she was snubbed, slapped, lectured, and exhorted. Her mind must have been strained and her vitality lowered by the need of opposing this, of disproving that. For here again we come within range of that very interesting and obscure masculine complex which has had so much influence upon the woman's movement; that deep-seated desire, not so much that *she* shall be inferior as that *he* shall be superior, which plants him wherever one looks, not only in front of the arts, but barring the way to politics too, even when the risk to himself seems infinitesimal and the suppliant humble and devoted. Even Lady Bessborough, I remembered, with all her passion for politics, must humbly bow herself and write to Lord Granville Leveson-Gower: "... notwithstanding all my violence in politics and talking so much on that subject, I perfectly agree with you that no woman has any business to meddle with that or any other serious business, farther than giving her opinion (if she is ask'd)." And so she goes on to spend her enthusiasm where it meets with no obstacle whatsoever upon that immensely important subject, Lord Granville's maiden speech in the House of Commons. The spectacle is certainly a strange one, I thought. The history of men's opposition to women's emancipation is more interesting perhaps than the story of that emancipation itself. An amusing book might be made of it if some young student at Girton or Newnham would collect examples and deduce a theory — but she would need thick gloves on her hands, and bars to protect her of solid gold.

Literature is strewn with the wreckage of men who have minded beyond reason the opinions of others.

But what is amusing now, I recollected, shutting Lady Bessborough, had to be taken in desperate earnest once. Opinions that one now pastes in a book labelled cock-a-doodle-dum and keeps for reading to select audiences on summer nights once drew tears, I can assure you. Among your grandmothers and great-grandmothers there were many that wept their eyes out. Florence Nightingale shrieked aloud in her agony.¹² Moreover, it is all very well for you, who have got yourselves to college and enjoy sitting-rooms — or is it only bed-sitting-rooms? — of your own to say that genius should disregard such opinions; that genius should be above caring what is said of it. Unfortunately, it is precisely the men or women of genius who mind most what is said of them. Remember Keats. Remember the words he had cut on his tombstone.¹³ Think of Tennyson; think — but I need hardly multiply instances of the undeniable, if very unfortunate, fact that it is the nature of the artist to mind excessively what is said about him. Literature is strewn with the wreckage of men who have minded beyond reason the opinions of others.

And this susceptibility of theirs is doubly unfortunate, I thought, returning again to my original enquiry into what state of mind is most propitious for creative work, because the mind of an artist, in

order to achieve the prodigious effort of freeing whole and entire the work that is in him, must be incandescent, like Shakespeare's mind, I conjectured, looking at the book which lay open at *Antony and Cleopatra*. There must be no obstacle in it, no foreign matter unconsumed.

For though we say that we know nothing about Shakespeare's state of mind, even as we say that, we are saying something about Shakespeare's state of mind. The reason perhaps why we know so little of Shakespeare — compared with Donne or Ben Jonson or Milton¹⁴ — is that his grudges and spites and antipathies are hidden from us. We are not held up by some "revelation" which reminds us of the writer. All desire to protest, to preach, to proclaim an injury, to pay off a score, to make the world the witness of some hardship or grievance was fired out of him and consumed. Therefore his poetry flows from him free and unimpeded. If ever a human being got his work expressed completely, it was Shakespeare. If ever a mind was incandescent, unimpeded, I thought, turning again to the bookcase, it was Shakespeare's mind.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. How did Elizabethan cultural roles limit opportunities for women in the literary arts?
2. Why does Woolf begin by referring to an eminent historian?
3. Why does history treat sixteenth- and seventeenth-century women with so little notice?
4. What is Woolf's point regarding the behavior of Oscar Browning?

5. Why does Woolf worry over the relation of opinions to facts?
6. What is the difference between the way women are represented in history and the way they are depicted in fiction?
7. Why does Woolf have Judith Shakespeare become pregnant?

■ ■ ■ SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Woolf says that a woman “born with a gift of poetry in the sixteenth century, was an unhappy woman, a woman at strife against herself” ([para. 10](#)). What does it mean for a woman to be “at strife against herself”? What are the characteristics of such a strife, and what are its implications for the woman? In what ways would she be aware of such inner strife?
2. Look up brief biographies of the women writers who took men’s names. Woolf lists three together: Currer Bell, George Eliot, and George Sand. What did they have in common? Why did they need to use a man’s name for their pseudonym? What did they do to avoid being stigmatized as women writers? Were they equally successful? Are they now considered feminist writers?
3. Woolf’s view is that biology determines one’s fate. She is explicitly speaking of female biology in our culture, but how much do you feel she attends to the entire range of gender? [Judith Butler](#) talks about gender deviance and its effect on the individual in a standardized society. Woolf’s society was standardized, but she belonged to a subculture of intellectuals, the Bloomsbury group, that practiced many forms of deviant gender behavior. Would she have argued as strongly in support of deviant sexual behavior as she does for equal opportunities for Shakespeare’s “sister”? What would her argument be? Present your case, using some of Woolf’s rhetorical techniques.
4. Read the book from which this essay comes, *A Room of One’s Own*. The last chapter discusses androgyny, the quality of possessing characteristics of both sexes. Woolf argues that perhaps a writer should not be exclusively male or female in outlook, but should

combine both. How effective is her argument in that chapter? How much of an impact did the book have on your own views of feminism?

5. Explain why it is so important for a woman to have “a room of one’s own.” Obviously, the use of the word *room* stands for much more than a simple room with four walls and a door. What is implied in the way Woolf uses this term? Do you think this point is still valid for women in the twenty-first century? Why are so many women in any age denied the right to have “a room of one’s own”?
6. Woolf says that “even in the nineteenth century a woman was not encouraged to be an artist. On the contrary, she was snubbed, slapped, lectured, and exhorted. Her mind must have been strained and her vitality lowered by the need of opposing this, of disproving that” ([para. 14](#)). Explain the implications of this statement, and decide whether it still describes the situation of many or most women. Use your personal experience where relevant, but consider the situations of any women you find interesting.

CONNECTIONS

1. [Karen Horney](#) and Woolf both take analytical approaches to their subject matter, despite the fact that Horney is a psychologist and Woolf is a literary figure. What methods of analysis does Woolf use that are also characteristic of Horney? Does Horney’s psychological approach to analyzing the relationship between men and women match Woolf’s? How does each author make use of narrative techniques in her analytic approach?
2. In what ways are [Mary Wollstonecraft](#) and Woolf in agreement about the waste of women’s talents in any age? As you comment on this, consider, too, the ways in which these writers differ in their approach to discussing women and the ways in which women sometimes cooperate in accepting their own restrictions. Which of these writers is more obviously a modern feminist in your mind? Which of them is more convincing? Why?

3. Based on Woolf's attitudes in this essay, which of the male writers in this collection comes closest to supporting feminist views? Consider especially the work of [Karl Marx](#), [Martin Luther King Jr.](#), and [Michael Gazzaniga](#). Do you think there are any male authors in this collection that would be antagonistic to Woolf's views?



Martin Luther King Jr. *Letter from Birmingham Jail*



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MARTIN LUTHER KING JR., (1929–1968) was the most influential civil rights leader in America for a period of more than fifteen years. He was an ordained minister with a doctorate in theology from Boston University. He worked primarily in the South, where he labored steadily to overthrow laws that promoted

segregation and to increase the number of black voters registered in southern communities.

From 1958 to 1968, demonstrations and actions opened up opportunities for African Americans who in the South hitherto had been prohibited from sitting in certain sections of buses, using facilities such as water fountains in bus stations, and sitting at luncheon counters with whites. Such laws — unjust and insulting, not to mention unconstitutional — were not challenged by local authorities. Martin Luther King Jr., who became famous for supporting a program to integrate buses in Montgomery, Alabama, was asked by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to assist in the fight for civil rights in Birmingham, Alabama, where an SCLC meeting was to be held.

King was arrested as the result of a program of sit-ins at luncheon counters and wrote the letter printed here to a group of clergymen who had criticized his position. King had been arrested before and would be arrested again — resembling Henry David Thoreau somewhat in his attitude toward laws that did not conform to moral justice.

King, like Thoreau, was willing to suffer for his views, especially when he found himself faced with punitive laws denying civil rights to all citizens. His is a classic case in which the officers of the government pled that they were dedicated to maintaining a stable civil society, even as they restricted King's individual rights. In 1963, many of the good people to whom King addressed this letter firmly believed that peace and order might be threatened by

granting African Americans the true independence and freedom that King insisted were their rights and indeed were guaranteed under the Constitution. This is why King's letter objects to an injustice that was rampant in Frederick Douglass's time but inexcusable in the time of John F. Kennedy.

Eventually the causes King promoted were victorious. His efforts helped change attitudes in the South and spur legislation that has benefited all Americans. His views concerning nonviolence spread throughout the world, and by the early 1960s he had become famous as a man who stood for human rights and human dignity virtually everywhere. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

Although King himself was nonviolent, his program left both him and his followers open to the threat of violence. The sit-ins and voter registration programs spurred countless bombings, threats, and murders by members of the white community. King's life was often threatened, his home bombed, his followers harassed. He was assassinated at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, on April 4, 1968. But before he died he saw — largely through his own efforts, influence, and example — the face of America change.

KING'S RHETORIC

The most obvious rhetorical tradition King assumes in this important work is that of the books of the Bible that were originally letters, such as Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians and his several letters to the Corinthians. Many of Paul's letters were written while

he was in prison in Rome, and he established a moral position that could inspire the citizens who received the letters. At the same time, Paul carried out the most important work of the early Christian church — spreading the word of Jesus to those who wished to be Christians but who needed clarification and encouragement.

It is not clear that the clergymen who received King's letter fully appreciated the rhetorical tradition he drew on — but they were men who preached from the Bible and certainly should have understood it. The text itself alludes to the mission of Paul and to his communications to his people. King works with this rhetorical tradition not only because it is effective but also because it resonates with the deepest aspect of his calling — spreading the Gospel of Christ. Brotherhood and justice were his message.

King's tone is one of utmost patience with his critics. He seems bent on winning them over to his point of view, just as he seems confident that — because they are, like him, clergymen — their goodwill should help them see the justice of his views.

His method is that of careful reasoning, focusing on the substance of their criticism, particularly on their complaints that his actions were “unwise and untimely” ([para. 1](#)). King takes each of those charges in turn, carefully analyzes it against his position, and then follows with the clearest possible statement of his own views and why he feels they are worth adhering to. “Letter from Birmingham Jail” is a model of close and reasonable analysis of a very complex situation. It succeeds largely because it remains

concrete, treating one issue after another carefully, refusing to be caught up in passion or posturing. Above all, King remains grounded in logic, convinced that his arguments will in turn convince his audience.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What kind of injustice did Martin Luther King find in Birmingham?
2. Why was Martin Luther King disappointed in the white churches?

Letter from Birmingham Jail

April 16, 1963

MY DEAR FELLOW CLERGYMEN:¹

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities “unwise and untimely.” Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I think I should indicate why I am here in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the view which argues against “outsiders coming in.” I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty-five affiliated organizations across the South, and one of them is the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Frequently we share staff, educational, and financial resources with our affiliates. Several months ago the affiliate here in Birmingham asked us to be on call to engage in a nonviolent direct-action program if such were deemed necessary.

We readily consented, and when the hour came we lived up to our promise. So I, along with several members of my staff, am here because I was invited here. I am here because I have organizational ties here.

But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their “thus saith the Lord” far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus² and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.³

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial, “outside agitator” idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.

You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations. I am sure that none of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city's white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action. We have gone through all these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. These are the hard brutal facts of the case. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the latter consistently refused to engage in good-faith negotiation.

Then, last September, came the opportunity to talk with leaders of Birmingham's economic community. In the course of the negotiations, certain promises were made by the merchants — for example, to remove the stores' humiliating racial signs. On the basis of these promises, the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the

leaders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights agreed to a moratorium on all demonstrations. As the weeks and months went by, we realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. A few signs, briefly removed, returned; the others remained.

As in so many past experiences, our hopes had been blasted, and the shadow of deep disappointment settled upon us. We had no alternative except to prepare for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and the national community. Mindful of the difficulties involved, we decided to undertake a process of self-purification. We began a series of workshops on nonviolence, and we repeatedly asked ourselves: "Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?" "Are you able to endure the ordeal of jail?" We decided to schedule our direct-action program for the Easter season, realizing that except for Christmas, this is the main shopping period of the year. Knowing that a strong economic-withdrawal program would be the by-product of direct action, we felt that this would be the best time to bring pressure to bear on the merchants for the needed change.

Then it occurred to us that Birmingham's mayoral election was coming up in March, and we speedily decided to postpone action until after election day. When we discovered that the Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene "Bull" Connor, had piled up enough votes to be in the run-off, we decided again to postpone action until the day after the run-off so that the demonstrations could not be used to cloud the issues. Like many

others, we waited to see Mr. Connor defeated, and to this end we endured postponement after postponement. Having aided in this community need, we felt that our direct-action program could be delayed no longer.

You may well ask, “Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches, and so forth? Isn’t negotiation a better path?” You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word “tension.” I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates⁴ felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.

The purpose of our direct-action program is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long

has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

One of the basic points in your statement is that the action that I and my associates have taken in Birmingham is untimely. Some have asked: "Why didn't you give the new city administration time to act?" The only answer that I can give to this query is that the new Birmingham administration must be prodded about as much as the outgoing one, before it will act. We are sadly mistaken if we feel that the election of Albert Boutwell as mayor will bring the millennium⁵ to Birmingham. While Mr. Boutwell is a much more gentle person than Mr. Connor, they are both segregationists, dedicated to maintenance of the status quo. I have hoped that Mr. Boutwell will be reasonable enough to see the futility of massive resistance to desegregation. But he will not see this without pressure from devotees of civil rights. My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but, as Reinhold Niebuhr⁶ has reminded us, groups tend to be more immoral than individuals.

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct-action campaign that was "well timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I

have heard the word “Wait!” It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This “Wait” has almost always meant “Never.” We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that “justice too long delayed is justice denied.”⁷

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.

We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jet-like speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse-and-buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, “Wait.” But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can’t go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is

closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son who is asking, "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross-country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness" — then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience.

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, at first glance it may seem rather paradoxical for us consciously to break laws. One may well ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and

obeying others?” The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine⁸ that “an unjust law is no law at all.”

Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a manmade code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas:⁹ An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber,¹⁰ substitutes an “I–it” relationship for an “I–thou” relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. Hence segregation is not only politically, economically, and sociologically unsound, it is morally wrong and sinful. Paul Tillich¹¹ has said that sin is separation. Is not segregation an existential expression of man’s tragic separation, his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness? Thus it is that I can urge men to obey the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court, for it is morally right; and I can urge them to disobey segregation ordinances, for they are morally wrong.

Let us consider a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself. This is *difference* made legal. By the same token, a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow and that it is willing to follow itself. This is *sameness* made legal.

Let me give another explanation. A law is unjust if it is inflicted on a minority that, as a result of being denied the right to vote, had no part in enacting or devising the law. Who can say that the legislature of Alabama which set up that state's segregation laws was democratically elected? Throughout Alabama all sorts of devious methods are used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters, and there are some counties in which, even though Negroes constitute a majority of the population, not a single Negro is registered. Can any law enacted under such circumstances be considered democratically structured?

Sometimes a law is just on its face and unjust in its application. For instance, I have been arrested on a charge of parading without a permit. Now, there is nothing wrong in having an ordinance which requires a permit for a parade. But such an ordinance becomes unjust when it is used to maintain segregation and to deny citizens the First Amendment privilege of peaceful assembly and protest.

I hope you are able to see the distinction I am trying to point out. In no sense do I advocate evading or defying the law, as would the rabid segregationist. That would lead to anarchy. One who

breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly, and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.

Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was evidenced subliminally in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar,¹² on the ground that a higher moral law was at stake. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks rather than submit to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire. To a degree, academic freedom is a reality today because Socrates practiced civil disobedience. In our own nation, the Boston Tea Party represented a massive act of civil disobedience.

I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.

We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was “legal” and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters¹³ did in Hungary was “illegal.” It was “illegal” to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler’s Germany. Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers. If today I lived in a Communist country where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country’s antireligious laws.

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro’s great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen’s Counciler¹⁴ or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to “order” than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says, “I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action”; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man’s freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a “more convenient season.” Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and that

when they fail in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress. I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that the present tension in the South is a necessary phase of the transition from an obnoxious negative peace, in which the Negro passively accepted his unjust plight, to a substantive and positive peace, in which all men will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion, before it can be cured.

In your statement you assert that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But is this a logical assertion? Isn't this like condemning a robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn't this like condemning Socrates because his unswerving commitment to truth and his philosophical inquiries precipitated the act by the misguided populace in which they made him drink hemlock? Isn't this like condemning Jesus because his unique God-consciousness and never-ceasing devotion to God's will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? We must come to see that, as the federal courts have consistently affirmed, it is wrong to urge an individual to cease his efforts to gain his basic constitutional rights because the quest may

precipitate violence. Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber.

I had also hoped that the white moderate would reject the myth concerning time in relation to the struggle for freedom. I have just received a letter from a white brother in Texas. He writes: "All Christians know that the colored people will receive equal rights eventually, but it is possible that you are in too great a religious hurry. It has taken Christianity almost two thousand years to accomplish what it has. The teachings of Christ take time to come to earth." Such an attitude stems from a tragic misconception of time, from the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually, time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively. More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than have the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people. Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right. Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy and transform our pending national elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity.

You speak of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. At first I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my nonviolent efforts as those of an extremist. I began thinking about the fact that I stand in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community. One is a force of complacency, made up in part of Negroes who, as a result of long years of oppression, are so drained of self-respect and a sense of “somebodiness” that they have adjusted to segregation; and in part of a few middle-class Negroes who, because of a degree of academic and economic security and because in some ways they profit by segregation, have become insensitive to the problems of the masses. The other force is one of bitterness and hatred, and it comes perilously close to advocating violence. It is expressed in the various black nationalist groups that are springing up across the nation, the largest and best known being Elijah Muhammad’s Muslim movement.¹⁵ Nourished by the Negro’s frustration over the continued existence of racial discrimination, this movement is made up of people who have lost faith in America, who have absolutely repudiated Christianity, and who have concluded that the white man is an incorrigible “devil.”

I have tried to stand between these two forces, saying that we need emulate neither the “do-nothingism” of the complacent nor the hatred and despair of the black nationalist. For there is the more excellent way of love and nonviolent protest. I am grateful to God that, through the influence of the Negro church, the way of nonviolence became an integral part of our struggle.

If this philosophy had not emerged, by now many streets of the South would, I am convinced, be flowing with blood. And I am further convinced that if our white brothers dismiss as “rabble-rousers” and “outside agitators” those of us who employ nonviolent direct action, and if they refuse to support our nonviolent efforts, millions of Negroes will, out of frustration and despair, seek solace and security in black nationalist ideologies — a development that would inevitably lead to a frightening racial nightmare.¹⁶

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom, and something without has reminded him that it can be gained. Consciously or unconsciously, he has been caught up by the *Zeitgeist*,¹⁷ and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America, and the Carribean, the United States Negro is moving with a sense of great urgency toward the promised land of racial justice. If one recognizes this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should readily understand why public demonstrations are taking place. The Negro has many pent-up resentments and latent frustrations, and he must release them. So let him march; let him make prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; let him go on freedom rides¹⁸ — and try to understand why he must do so. If his repressed emotions are not released in nonviolent ways, they will seek expression through violence; this is not a threat but a fact of history. So I have not said to my people, “Get rid of your discontent.” Rather, I have

tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled into the creative outlet of nonviolent direct action. And now this approach is being termed extremist.

But though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label. Was not Jesus an extremist for love: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” Was not Amos an extremist for justice: “Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel: “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” Was not Martin Luther an extremist: “Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God.” And John Bunyan: “I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience.” And Abraham Lincoln: “This nation cannot survive half slave and half free.” And Thomas Jefferson: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal ...”¹⁹ So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice? In that dramatic scene on Calvary’s hill three men were crucified. We must never forget that all three were crucified for the same crime — the crime of extremism. Two were extremists for immorality, and thus fell below their environment. The other, Jesus Christ, was an extremist for love, truth, and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment. Perhaps the

South, the nation, and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.

I had hoped that the white moderate would see this need. Perhaps I was too optimistic; perhaps I expected too much. I suppose I should have realized that few members of the oppressor race can understand the deep groans and passionate yearnings of the oppressed race, and still fewer have the vision to see that injustice must be rooted out by strong, persistent, and determined action. I am thankful, however, that some of our white brothers in the South have grasped the meaning of this social revolution and committed themselves to it. They are still all too few in quantity, but they are big in quality. Some — such as Ralph McGill, Lillian Smith, Harry Golden, James McBride Dabbs, Ann Braden, and Sarah Patton Boyle — have written about our struggle²⁰ in eloquent and prophetic terms. Others have marched with us down nameless streets of the South. They have languished in filthy, roach-infested jails, suffering the abuse and brutality of policemen who view them as “dirty nigger-lovers.” Unlike so many of their moderate brothers and sisters, they have recognized the urgency of the moment and sensed the need for powerful “action” antidotes to combat the disease of segregation.

Let me take note of my other major disappointment. I have been so greatly disappointed with the white church and its leadership. Of course, there are some notable exceptions. I am not unmindful of the fact that each of you has taken some significant stands on this issue. I commend you, Reverend Stallings, for your Christian stand on this past Sunday, in welcoming Negroes to your worship

service on a nonsegregated basis. I commend the Catholic leaders of this state for integrating Spring Hill College several years ago.

But despite these notable exceptions, I must honestly reiterate that I have been disappointed with the church. I do not say this as one of those negative critics who can always find something wrong with the church. I say this as a minister of the gospel, who loves the church; who was nurtured in its bosom; who has been sustained by its spiritual blessings and who will remain true to it as long as the cord of life shall lengthen.

When I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery, Alabama, a few years ago, I felt we would be supported by the white church. I felt that the white ministers, priests, and rabbis of the South would be among our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows.

In spite of my shattered dreams, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership of this community would see the justice of our cause and, with deep moral concern, would serve as the channel through which our just grievances could reach the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed....

There was a time when the church was very powerful — in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society. Whenever the early Christians entered a town, the people in power became disturbed and immediately sought to convict the Christians for being “disturbers of the peace” and “outside agitators.” But the Christians pressed on, in the conviction that they were “a colony of heaven,” called to obey God rather than man. Small in number, they were big in commitment. They were too God-intoxicated to be “astronomically intimidated.” By their effort and example they brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and gladiatorial contests.

Things are different now. So often the contemporary church is a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. So often it is an archdefender of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the powerful structure of the average community is consoled by the church’s silent — and often even vocal — sanction of things as they are.

But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If today’s church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. Every day I meet young people whose disappointment with the church has turned into outright disgust.

Perhaps I have once again been too optimistic. Is organized religion too inextricably bound to the status quo to save our nation and the world? Perhaps I must turn my faith to the inner spiritual church, the church within the church, as the true *ekklesia*²¹ and the hope of the world. But again I am thankful to God that some noble souls from the ranks of organized religion have broken loose from the paralyzing chains of conformity and joined us as active partners in the struggle for freedom. They have left their secure congregations and walked the streets of Albany, Georgia, with us. They have gone down the highways of the South on torturous rides for freedom. Yes, they have gone to jail with us. Some have been dismissed from their churches, have lost the support of their bishops and fellow ministers. But they have acted in the faith that right defeated is stronger than evil triumphant. Their witness has been the spiritual salt that has preserved the true meaning of the gospel in these troubled times. They have carved a tunnel of hope through the dark mountain of disappointment.

I hope the church as a whole will meet the challenge of this decisive hour. But even if the church does not come to the aid of justice, I have no despair about the future. I have no fear about the outcome of our struggle in Birmingham, even if our motives are at present misunderstood. We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with America's destiny. Before the pilgrims landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson etched the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence

across the pages of history, we were here. For more than two centuries our forebears labored in this country without wages; they made cotton king; they built the homes of their masters while suffering gross injustice and shameful humiliation — and yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to thrive and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands.

Before closing I feel impelled to mention one other point in your statement that has troubled me profoundly. You warmly commended the Birmingham police force for keeping “order” and “preventing violence.” I doubt that you would have so warmly commended the police force if you had seen its dogs sinking their teeth into unarmed, nonviolent Negroes. I doubt that you would so quickly commend the policemen if you were to observe their ugly and inhumane treatment of Negroes here in the city jail; if you were to watch them push and curse old Negro women and young Negro girls; if you were to see them slap and kick old Negro men and young boys; if you were to observe them, as they did on two occasions, refuse to give us food because we wanted to sing our grace together. I cannot join you in your praise of the Birmingham police department.

It is true that the police have exercised a degree of discipline in handling the demonstrators. In this sense they have conducted themselves rather “nonviolently” in public. But for what purpose? To preserve the evil system of segregation. Over the past few

years I have consistently preached that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek. I have tried to make clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or perhaps even more so, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends. Perhaps Mr. Connor and his policemen have been rather nonviolent in public, as was Chief Pritchett in Albany, Georgia, but they have used the moral means of nonviolence to maintain the immoral end of racial injustice. As T. S. Eliot²² has said, “The last temptation is the greatest treason: To do the right deed for the wrong reason.”

I wish you had commended the Negro sit-inners and demonstrators of Birmingham for their sublime courage, their willingness to suffer, and their amazing discipline in the midst of great provocation. One day the South will recognize its real heroes. They will be the James Merediths,²³ with the noble sense of purpose that enables them to face jeering and hostile mobs, and with the agonizing loneliness that characterizes the life of the pioneer. They will be old, oppressed, battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy-two-year-old woman in Montgomery, Alabama, who rose up with a sense of dignity and with her people decided not to ride segregated buses, and who responded with ungrammatical profundity to one who inquired about her weariness: “My feets is tired, but my soul is at rest.” They will be the young high school and college students, the young ministers of the gospel and a host of their elders, courageously and nonviolently sitting in at lunch counters and willingly going to jail for conscience’s sake. One day the South will know that when

these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters, they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judaeo-Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

Never before have I written so long a letter. I'm afraid it is much too long to take your precious time. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else can one do when he is alone in a narrow jail cell, other than write long letters, think long thoughts, and pray long prayers?

If I have said anything in this letter that overstates the truth and indicates an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything that understates the truth and indicates my having a patience that allows me to settle for anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me.

I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith. I also hope that circumstances will soon make it possible for me to meet each of you, not as an integrationist or a civil rights leader but as a fellow clergyman and a Christian brother. Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant

stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.

Yours in the cause of
Peace and Brotherhood,
Martin Luther King Jr.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. Define “nonviolent direct action” ([para. 2](#)). In what areas of human experience is it best implemented? Is politics its best area of application? What are the four steps in a nonviolent campaign?
2. Do you agree that “law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice” ([para. 24](#))? Why? Describe how law and order either do or do not establish justice in your community. Compare notes with your peers.
3. King describes an unjust law as “a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself” ([para. 17](#)). Devise one or two other definitions of an unjust law. What unjust laws currently on the books do you disagree with?
4. What do you think is the best-written paragraph in the essay? Why?
5. King cites “tension” in [paragraph 10](#) and elsewhere as a beneficial force. Do you agree? What kind of tension does he mean?
6. In what ways was King an extremist ([paras. 30–31](#))?
7. In his letter, to what extent does King consider the needs of women? Would he feel that issues of women’s rights are unrelated to issues of racial equality?
8. According to King, how should a government function in relation to the needs of the individual? Would he agree with Ortega y Gasset that America is “the paradise of the masses”?

■ ■ ■ SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Write a brief letter protesting an injustice that you feel may not be entirely understood by people you respect. Clarify the nature of the injustice, the reasons that people hold an unjust view, and the reasons your views should be accepted. Consult King's letter, and use his techniques. How are injustice and immorality related?
2. In [paragraph 43](#), King says, "I have consistently preached that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek." What does he mean by this? Define the ends he seeks and the means he approves. Do you agree with him on this point? If you have read the selection "[The Qualities of the Prince](#)" from Machiavelli, contrast their respective views. Which view seems more reasonable to you?
3. The first part of the letter defends King's journey to Birmingham as a Christian to help his fellows gain justice. He challenges the view that he is an outsider, using such expressions as "network of mutuality" and "garment of destiny" ([para. 4](#)). How effective is his argument? Examine the letter for other expressions that justify King's intervention on behalf of his brothers and sisters. Using his logic, describe other social areas where you might be justified in acting on your own views on behalf of humanity. Do you expect your endeavors would be welcomed? Are there any areas where you think it would be wrong to intervene?
4. In [paragraphs 15–22](#), King discusses two kinds of laws — those that are morally right and those that are morally wrong. Which laws did King regard as morally right? Which laws did he consider morally wrong? Analyze one or two current laws that you feel are morally wrong. Be sure to be fair in describing the laws and establishing their nature. Then explain why you feel they are morally wrong. Would you feel justified in breaking these laws? Would you feel prepared, as King was, to pay the penalties for one who breaks the law?
5. Compare King's letter with sections of Paul's letters to the faithful in the New Testament. Either choose a single letter, such as the Epistle to the Romans, or select passages from Romans, the two letters to

the Corinthians, the Galatians, the Ephesians, the Thessalonians, or the Philippians. How did Paul and King agree and disagree about brotherly love, the mission of Christ, the mission of the church, concern for the law, and the duties of the faithful? Inventory the New Testament letters and King's letter carefully for concrete evidence of similar or contrary positions.

6. Throughout "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Martin Luther King Jr., stresses the question of justice. In [paragraphs 15–22](#), he raises the question of moral laws and immoral laws. If justice depends on moral laws, can we say that justice is a form of morality or ethical behavior? Are justice and morality the same? Is there a religious issue connected to justice? Is that why King, a minister of the church, constantly refers to justice? How are morality and justice connected? What do they have in common?

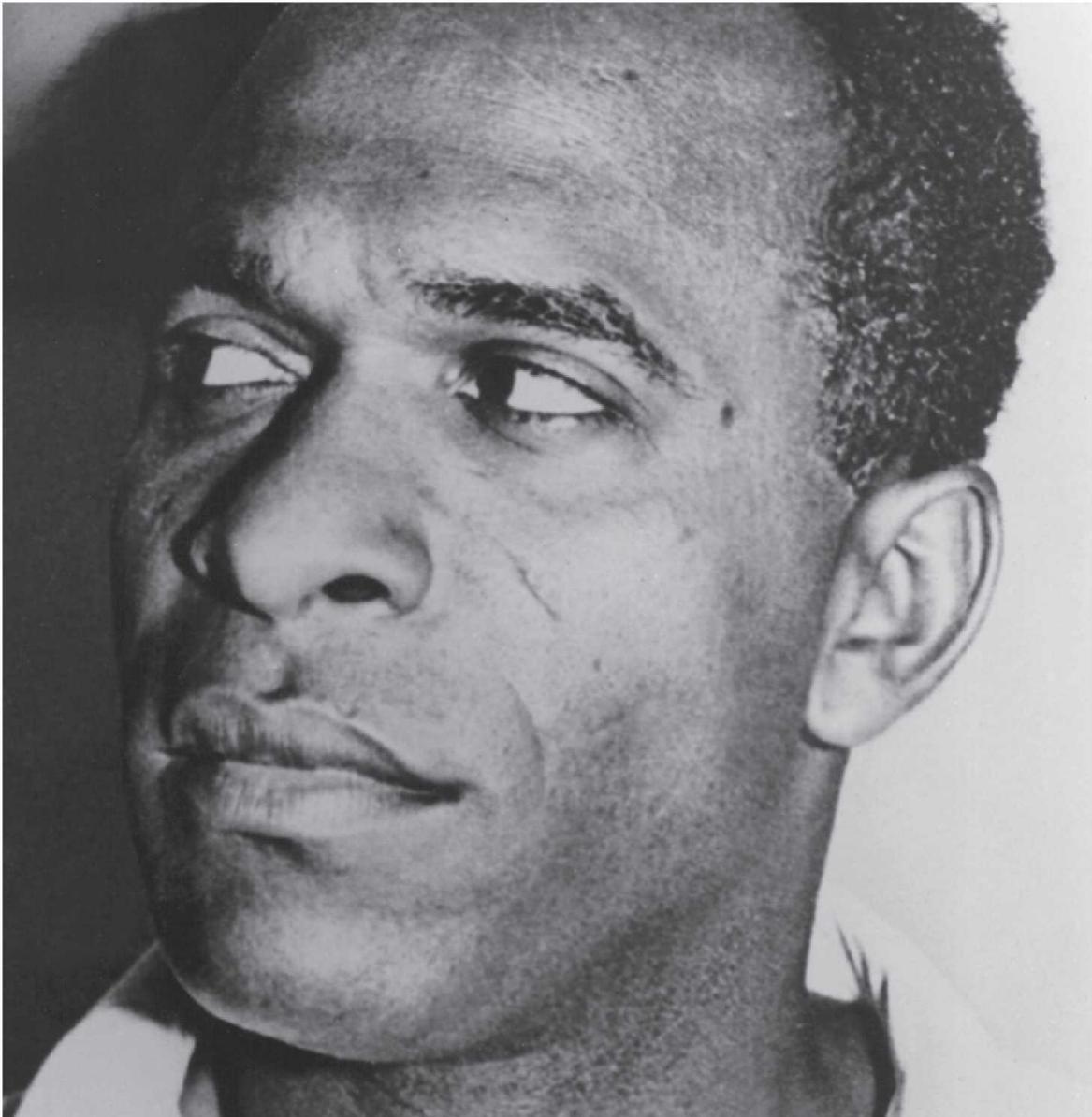
CONNECTIONS

1. How would King define "the aim of man"? Would he agree with [Aristotle](#) that "No one would call a man just who did not take pleasure in doing justice" ([para. 21](#))? Would he agree with Aristotle that to "live well" and "do well" are the same as to be "happy" ([para. 8](#))? Write a brief essay that defends the view that King, because of the nobility of his actions, is happy while he is in Birmingham Jail. Would King agree with Aristotle that happiness is "the highest of all realizable goods" ([para. 8](#))?
2. To what extent do Martin Luther King Jr.'s views about government coincide with those of [Lao-tzu](#)? Is there a legitimate comparison to be made between King's policy of nonviolent resistance and Lao-tzu's judicious inactivity? To what extent would King have agreed with Lao-tzu's views? Would Lao-tzu have supported King's position in his letter, or would he have interpreted events differently?
3. The most obvious opposition to Martin Luther King Jr.'s views on nonviolence and respect for the law is [Frantz Fanon, "On Violence."](#) Examine their essays to see whether or not you can find common ground between them. Examine their backgrounds, their cultural

attitudes, and their views about the nature of human beings. What might have come out of them discussing matters of politics, government, religion, or thought? What might they have agreed on, and where would they have diverged?



Frantz Fanon *On Violence*



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FRANZ FANON (1925–1961), one of the most influential political thinkers of the post–World War II period, Frantz Fanon (1925–1961) worked as a psychiatrist in France and Algeria throughout the period of the Algerian war of independence (1954–1962). He was born to middle-class parents and raised on the Island of Martinique, which had been a French colony in the Caribbean,

and, after the war, chose to become a Department of France. It now sends delegates to the French Parliament in Paris. In 1943, when Fanon was 17, the French Navy took over the island and ruled it as part of the French Vichy government — essentially a collaborationist arm of the German mainland control of defeated France. But the true Free French Army was in nearby Dominica, and Fanon, reacting against the racism and torment of the naval government on Martinique, left for the island of Dominica and signed up as a soldier.

He began his service in North Africa but soon went to fight in southern France, where he was wounded and received the Croix de Guerre. He returned to Martinique after experiencing racism in France, something that surprised him. He spent time with his former teacher, Aimé Césaire (1913–2008), a poet and writer who tutored Fanon in politics and the reality of racism, helping begin Fanon's intellectual journey toward political radicalism. Unhappy with postwar Martinique, Fanon finished his undergraduate degree and went back to France to train in medical school as a psychiatrist, earning his degree in 1951. When his first doctoral dissertation was rejected, he published it as *Black Skin White Masks* (1952), now known as a central work of twentieth-century critical race theory, and wrote another dissertation for his doctorate in 1954.

Fanon practiced psychiatry in France for a short time but eventually left for Algeria, which was on the verge of war. When Fanon was in the Free French Army, he had spent time in North Africa and Algeria, and by the time he arrived again in Algeria he

had become a severe critic of European colonial racism, partly because of his army experience and partly because of the influence of the work of Aimé Césaire, the existentialists, and other theorists. The war in Algeria, in which France brought its full military might to bear to crush the rebellion in its colony, was long and vicious. Reports of French torture and widespread violence throughout the country produced protests in France and denunciations by French intellectuals like Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. In 1959 Fanon published his own book on his experience: *Year Five of the Algerian Revolution*, which appears in several editions with different titles. It is out of the terrors of the Algerian revolution that Fanon's most significant ideas developed regarding the evils of European colonization.

During the revolution Fanon treated the mental problems of the French soldiers who practiced torture on Algerian captives, but he also treated the very Algerians who were tortured. The terrible damage done to both groups fed his alarm and anger against colonization. France did not want to lose its colony, Algeria, because it produced valuable goods and fed the profits of many French industrialists and businesses. The Algerians wanted control of their own nation, resources, and property; in other words, they wanted freedom to govern themselves. All of this turmoil moved Fanon to devote himself to the study of the cultures that had been shaped by colonization. After having witnessed first-hand the decolonization of Algeria, he began to develop theoretical positions that have influenced a wide variety of later revolutionary figures such as the Black Panthers, who in the 1970s used his ideas in many of their publications. Radical and

revolutionary movements in South Africa, Bolivia, and other countries have relied on his work for inspiration.

His most influential book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, from which the following selection comes, was published posthumously in 1961 and remains the book with which he is most identified. Before he finished it he was diagnosed with leukemia. The French removed him from Algeria to Tunisia, where he edited a number of revolutionary periodicals, but when he became seriously ill, the American CIA rescued him and brought him to the Naval Hospital at Bethesda, Maryland, where he died in 1961. Most of what he writes about in *The Wretched of the Earth* is obviously informed by his experiences in Algeria. His ideas about colonization are wide ranging because by the end of his life he had witnessed the results of colonization first-hand in many contexts. As a psychiatrist, he was especially sensitive to the states of mind produced by that experience.

FANON'S RHETORIC

The opening chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, "On Violence," is the most frequently quoted chapter by revolutionaries who are influenced by Fanon's ideas. Fanon, because he was in two wars, one as combatant and one as a medical provider, was more familiar with absolute violence than most of the revolutionaries who followed him and used his work for their slogans. Because he was also among the colonized both politically and culturally, he stands on firm ground when he describes and condemns colonization. Finally, because he took part in the struggle to end

colonization in Algeria, he has first-hand experience in each of the areas he discusses in these pages.

Because this work is translated from French, we can make few comments on the style as it was in its first edition, but we can say that the translation we have here is marked by simplicity and clarity. The selection is designed not just to be understood, but to be convincing. This is an argument that assumes when you are finished reading you will agree with him about the necessity of violence in decolonization. This is not a classical argument (see [“Classical Argument” in Chapter 2](#)) because even though Fanon states his position clearly and readily defends it with assertions about colonialism and violence, he does not present a battery of evidence to bolster his argument. In that sense it is also not a Rogerian argument because he does not present evidence or rebut contrary views that might challenge his argument. This is a hybrid argument that is best described by [Toulmin Argument in Chapter 2](#). Fanon is very careful to make his claim early: “decolonization is always a violent event” ([para. 1](#)), which appears in the first three lines of the selection. However, there are no examples, no data that help prove his claim. Instead, Fanon relies on the historical events he has witnessed, and which were all widely observed and known to his audience. He does not feel the need to be specific. He uses the Toulmin approach by assuming that everyone knows that what he says is true, and therefore he expects his claim to be taken for granted. This form of argument is profoundly effective for convincing readers who already agree with him. However, it is not as effective for those who disagree and

may produce a counterargument that is based on convincing evidence.

The force of Fanon's use of language is one of the most powerful aspects of his argument. In that first paragraph he produces a declarative sentence that does not back down, offer any uncertainty, or limit its energy: "The need for this change [for the social fabric to be turned inside out] exists in a raw, repressed, and reckless state in the lives and consciousness of colonized men and women." Later on, he becomes almost sensational: "In its bare reality, decolonization reeks of red-hot cannonballs and bloody knives" ([para. 5](#)). By the time we get to this sentence we are already bound to believe it. To be sure, Fanon has seen cannons and knives and much more, and because we know this, we tend to trust and agree with him.

Fanon's selection abounds in powerful claims — of the sort that could be thesis statements or the first statement of an argument — and most of them are definitions, one of his strongest rhetorical strategies:

- "Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is clearly an agenda for total disorder" ([para. 2](#)).
- "The colonial world is a compartmentalized world" ([para. 7](#)).
- "The colonized world is a world divided in two" ([para. 8](#)).
- "We have seen how the government's agent uses a language of pure violence" ([para. 8](#)).
- "The colonist's sector is a white folks' sector, a sector of foreigners" ([para. 9](#)).

- “To destroy the colonial world means nothing less than demolishing the colonist’s sector, burying it deep within the earth or banishing it from the territory” ([para. 12](#)).

With declamations of this sort in his argument, we can see how those who already agree with him will see him providing a basis for their own actions.

One more rhetorical strategy that Fanon depends upon is the dramatic dichotomy. He sets up absolute oppositions. Colonists are different “species” of man from the colonized: “The colonized world is a world divided in two” ([para. 8](#)). Throughout the selection Fanon emphasizes that decolonization is a pitting of two forces, and only two forces, against one another. The certainty of his essay does not permit considering a possible third force, such as a spiritual foundation, or an assimilated class that profits culturally from the colonizer. In fact, that possibility is absolutely one of the least likely Fanon would consider.

This rhetorical strategy is enormously powerful in politics, and you may have seen it in political ads that pit the Republicans against the Democrats, or that pit one kind of education against another, or one social group against another. The possibilities are endless, and because there are only two contenders, we are psychologically ready to deal with such either/or simplicities. Fanon was a psychiatrist and also a fine writer of dramatic literature and fiction. He brings all of this skill to his argument here.

■ ■ PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Frantz Fanon's "On Violence." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What is decolonization?
2. Why are colonist and colonizer people of different species?
3. Why is violence inevitable in decolonization?

From *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Richard Philcox.

On Violence

National liberation, national reawakening, restoration of the nation to the people or Commonwealth, whatever the name used, whatever the latest expression, decolonization is always a violent event. At whatever level we study it —individual encounters, a change of name for a sports club, the guest list at a cocktail party, members of a police force or the board of directors of a state or private bank — decolonization is quite simply the substitution of one “species” of mankind by another. The substitution is unconditional, absolute, total, and seamless. We could go on to portray the rise of a new nation, the establishment of a new state, its diplomatic relations and its economic and political orientation. But instead we have decided to describe the kind of tabula rasa¹ which from the outset defines any decolonization. What is singularly important is that it starts from the very first day with the basic claims of the colonized. In actual fact, proof of success lies in a social fabric that has been changed inside out. This change is extraordinarily important because it is desired, clamored for, and demanded. The need for this change exists in a raw, repressed, and reckless state in the lives and consciousness of colonized men and women. But the eventuality of such a change is also experienced as a terrifying future in the consciousness of another “species” of men and women: the *colons*, the colonists.

Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is clearly an agenda for

total disorder.

Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is clearly an agenda for total disorder. But it cannot be accomplished by the wave of a magic wand, a natural cataclysm, or a gentleman's agreement. Decolonization, we know, is an historical process; In other words, it can only be understood, it can only find its significance and become self coherent insofar as we can discern the history-making movement which gives it form and substance. Decolonization is the encounter between two congenitally antagonistic forces that in fact owe their singularity to the kind of reification² secreted and nurtured by the colonial situation. Their first confrontation was colored by violence and their cohabitation — or rather the exploitation of the colonized by the colonizer — continued at the point of the bayonet and under cannon fire. The colonist and the colonized are old acquaintances. And consequently, the colonist is right when he says he “knows” them. It is the colonist who *fabricated* and *continues to fabricate* the colonized subject. The colonist derives his validity, i.e., his wealth, from the colonial system.

Decolonization never goes unnoticed, for it focuses on and fundamentally alters being, and transforms the spectator crushed to a nonessential state into a privileged actor, captured in a virtually grandiose fashion by the spotlight of History. It infuses a new rhythm, specific to a new generation of men, with a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is truly the creation of new men. But such a creation cannot be attributed to a

supernatural power: The “thing” colonized becomes a man through the very process of liberation.

Decolonization, therefore, implies the urgent need to thoroughly challenge the colonial situation. Its definition can, if we want to describe it accurately, be summed up in the well-known words: “The last shall be first.” Decolonization is verification of this. At a descriptive level, therefore, any decolonization is a success.

In its bare reality, decolonization reeks of red-hot cannonballs and bloody knives. For the last can be the first only after a murderous and decisive confrontation between the two protagonists. This determination to have the last move up to the front, to have them clamber up (too quickly, say some) the famous echelons of an organized society, can only succeed by resorting to every means, including, of course, violence.

You do not disorganize a society, however primitive it may be, with such an agenda if you are not determined from the very start to smash every obstacle encountered. The colonized, who have made up their mind to make such an agenda into a driving force, have been prepared for violence from time immemorial. As soon as they are born it is obvious to them that their cramped world, riddled with taboos, can only be challenged by out and out violence.

The colonial world is a compartmentalized world. It is obviously as superfluous to recall the existence of “native” towns and European towns, of schools for “natives” and schools for Europeans, as it is

to recall apartheid³ in South Africa. Yet if we penetrate inside this compartmentalization we shall at least bring to light some of its key aspects. By penetrating its geographical configuration and classification we shall be able to delineate the backbone on which the decolonized society is reorganized.

The colonized world is a world divided in two. The dividing line, the border, is represented by the barracks and the police stations. In the colonies, the official, legitimate agent, the spokesperson for the colonizer and the regime of oppression, is the police officer or the soldier. In capitalist societies, education, whether secular or religious, the teaching of moral reflexes handed down from father to son, the exemplary integrity of workers decorated after fifty years of loyal and faithful service, the fostering of love for harmony and wisdom, those aesthetic forms of respect for the status quo,⁴ instill in the exploited a mood of submission and inhibition which considerably eases the task of the agents of law and order. In capitalist countries a multitude of sermonizers, counselors, and “confusion-mongers” intervene between the exploited and the authorities. In colonial regions, however, the proximity and frequent, direct intervention by the police and the military ensure the colonized are kept under close scrutiny, and contained by rifle butts and napalm. We have seen how the government's agent uses a language of pure violence. The agent does not alleviate oppression or mask domination. He displays and demonstrates them with the clear conscience of the law enforcer, and brings violence into the homes and minds of the colonized subject.

The “native” sector is not complementary to the European sector. The two confront each other, but not in the service of a higher unity. Governed by a purely Aristotelian logic, they follow the dictates of mutual exclusion: There is no conciliation possible, one of them is superfluous. The colonist’s sector is a sector built to last, all stone and steel. It’s a sector of lights and paved roads, where the trash cans constantly overflow with strange and wonderful garbage, undreamed-of leftovers. The colonist’s feet can never be glimpsed, except perhaps in the sea, but then you can never get close enough. They are protected by solid shoes in a sector where the streets are clean and smooth, without a pothole, without a stone. The colonist’s sector is a sated, sluggish sector, its belly is permanently full of good things. The colonist’s sector is a white folks’ sector, a sector of foreigners.

The colonized’s sector, or at least the “native” quarters, the shanty town, the Medina, the reservation, is a disreputable place inhabited by disreputable people. You are born anywhere, anyhow. You die anywhere, from anything. It’s a world with no space, people are piled one on top of the other, the shacks squeezed tightly together. The colonized’s sector is a famished sector, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal, and light. The colonized’s sector is a sector that crouches and cowers, a sector on its knees, a sector that is prostrate. It’s a sector of niggers, a sector of towelheads. The gaze that the colonized subject casts at the colonist’s sector is a look of lust, a look of envy. Dreams of possession. Every type of possession: of sitting at the colonist’s table and sleeping in his bed, preferably with his wife. The colonized man is an envious man. The colonist is aware of this as

he catches the furtive glance, and constantly on his guard, realizes bitterly that: “They want to take our place.” And it’s true there is not one colonized subject who at least once a day does not dream of taking the place of the colonist.

It is not the factories, the estates, or the bank account which primarily characterize the “ruling class.” The ruling species is first and foremost the outsider from elsewhere, different from the indigenous population, “the others.”

This compartmentalized world, this world divided in two, is inhabited by different species. The singularity of the colonial context lies in the fact that economic reality, inequality, and enormous disparities in lifestyles never manage to mask the human reality. Looking at the immediacies of the colonial context, it is clear that what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to. In the colonies the economic infrastructure is also a superstructure. The cause is effect: You are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why a Marxist analysis⁵ should always be slightly stretched when it comes to addressing the colonial issue. It is not just the concept of the precapitalist society, so effectively studied by Marx, which needs to be reexamined here. The serf is essentially

different from the knight, but a reference to divine right is needed to justify this difference in status. In the colonies the foreigner imposed himself using his cannons and machines. Despite the success of his pacification, in spite of his appropriation, the colonist always remains a foreigner. It is not the factories, the estates, or the bank account which primarily characterize the “ruling class.” The ruling species is first and foremost the outsider from elsewhere, different from the indigenous population, “the others.”

The violence which governed the ordering of the colonial world, which tirelessly punctuated the destruction of the indigenous social fabric, and demolished unchecked the systems of reference of the country’s economy, lifestyles, and modes of dress, this same violence will be vindicated and appropriated when, taking history into their own hands, the colonized swarm into the forbidden cities. To blow the colonial world to smithereens is henceforth a clear image within the grasp and imagination of every colonized subject. To dislocate the colonial world does not mean that once the borders have been eliminated there will be a right of way between the two sectors. To destroy the colonial world means nothing less than demolishing the colonist’s sector, burying it deep within the earth or banishing it from the territory.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. How does Fanon describe colonization?
2. What is decolonization?
3. How does Fanon characterize the colonist?

4. What is the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized?
5. Who colonizes whom in Fanon's essay?
6. Why does the colonizer resist decolonization?
7. What does Fanon mean by his references to compartmentalism?

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Fanon makes a bold claim in [paragraph 1](#) when he says, “decolonization is quite simply the substitution of one ‘species’ of mankind for another.” Analyze the selection to clarify what Fanon means by the statement — but first make an effort to define what he means by a “species” of mankind. Do you agree that colonization involves more than one species of mankind? Why does Fanon use such a loaded word as “species”? Be sure to include the scientific definition of the word and to consider how Fanon plays on aspects of this definition.
2. One interesting rhetorical strategy Fanon uses is the citation from the Bible: “The first shall be last and the last shall be first” (Matthew 20:16). Look up the quotation and explain what you think Fanon means by quoting Jesus here. What is the force of this quotation in his argument? Why would he cite a major Christian statement in a political discussion? In what ways does this quotation support his views on the necessity of violence? Is it all that unusual for theorists to cite the Bible? Do you find such citations reassuring? Are they convincing?
3. Do you agree that all decolonization must be violent? Research the decolonization of India in 1947. Would you categorize that decolonization as violent? Consider the message of Mahatma Gandhi, as well as other Indian voices for decolonization at the time. Fanon does not mention colonization in India or anywhere else. How would his argument need to change if he were to refer to India's decolonization or South Africa's decolonization?

4. Fanon says in [paragraph 6](#), “The colonized, who have made up their mind to make such an agenda into a driving force, have been prepared for violence from time immemorial.” In a brief essay, decide whether or not this is a reasonable statement. If Fanon is correct, what conditions would have helped to make this statement true? If you have had any experience in a colony or formerly colonized country, can you verify Fanon’s assertion or not?
5. After World War II, France began to lose its colonies. Fanon is most familiar with these historical circumstances, and it is likely that events in Algeria, Indochina (Vietnam), and Cameroon helped shape his essay. Research the decolonization in any one of France’s postwar colonies and use the events that characterize that decolonization to explain why Fanon takes such an uncompromising position on the use of violence in decolonization.
6. This selection is marked by a persistent use of oppositional forces to describe the events and circumstances that Fanon explores. Go through the essay and pull out all the opposing groups, such as the colonizer and the colonized, and show how Fanon uses these separations to give strength to his essay. Which of the opposing forces do you find most important to his argument? Which opposing force do you find you yourself may belong to? Do you find all these oppositions to be convincing and reasonable?

CONNECTIONS

1. In his discussion of the attraction of democracy, [Francis Fukuyama](#) talks extensively about social classes: the working class, the middle class, the bourgeoisie. Fanon ignores the issue of social class entirely. Given Fanon’s description of colonization, write an essay that argues that the question of social class might make the possibility of a nonviolent decolonization possible. Which social classes do you see participating in a peaceful rebellion? Does Fukuyama seem to agree with Fanon about the necessity of violence in decolonization, or would he find himself opposed to Fanon’s views?

2. How would Fanon's dichotomies of the colonized and colonizer inform you about the forces at work in [Martin Luther King Jr.'s, "Letter from Birmingham Jail"](#)? Is King's situation in jail an example of colonization? What are King's attitudes toward other religious leaders, including those who are slow to help him? How sympathetic would King be, even in jail, to Fanon's view that violence is the only choice for undoing colonization?



Barbara Ehrenreich *Is The Middle Class Doomed?*



Robin Holland/Contour RA/Getty Images

BARBARA EHRENREICH (b. 1941) was born in Butte, Montana, where her father and grandfather had worked as miners. Her father studied at the Butte School of Mines and began a career that took him to several major mining areas in the United States. Throughout her childhood her parents were outspoken about workers' rights and political issues. Slowly, her family achieved middle-class status, and as a result she was able to earn her undergraduate degree at Reed College, in Portland, Oregon. Her original studies were scientific, with a degree in chemistry followed by a short stint studying theoretical physics at Rockefeller University before shifting her focus to molecular biology. Her work

in biology led her eventually to teach at the State University of New York at Old Westbury. As an academic, she focused her attention on matters of women's health.

After having co-authored a well-received book on women's health, Ehrenreich decided to leave her teaching job in order to write full time. She eventually saw her work published in a variety of popular and underground publications and began developing book-length projects. During this time, Ehrenreich was also an activist for women's health and women's rights issues. Ehrenreich has not only written about economic hardship and possible changes that might alleviate the pains of the poor but has taken personal action to make people aware of the struggles of the less privileged.

Ehrenreich is probably best known for her 2001 book, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. At the time of publication it caused a sensation because Ehrenreich, rather than writing the book based on general research and published documents, spent three months working at minimum wage jobs. At the time she was working on *Nickel and Dimed* the American economy was booming, and government and cultural rhetoric insisted that people on welfare could find jobs if they wanted them and that they could raise themselves out of poverty. So, Ehrenreich investigated this claim, beginning as a waitress in Key West in Florida. She was paid \$2.43 an hour plus tips. She had to find a place to live for \$500 a month and thought she could make it, but in the summer the tourists dried up and she had to get a second job. She was earning less than \$6.00 an hour and was forced to

move to a more dangerous area. For her second month she went to Portland, Maine, where she got a house cleaning job at Merry Maids. The company charged \$25 an hour per worker, but paid the workers only \$6.65 an hour. Again, Ehrenreich found that she could not sustain a place to live and feed herself on one job. She found another job and still had to go to local charities for food stamps that restricted her from buying fresh fruit or chicken. Her fellow workers, she found, were often eating potato chips for lunch, and sometimes little or nothing until dinner.

Finally, Ehrenreich went to Middle America: Minneapolis, where she worked for Walmart for \$7.00 an hour. The official “living hourly wage” at that time and place was \$11.75. Ehrenreich quickly realized even as a single woman with no children she could not survive on only one job and that she was doomed to live in a trailer or transitional housing, following the pattern of most of her fellow workers. Her description of the circumstances in which her fellow workers lived exposed the plight of American workers and made many people more aware of the everyday difficulties they face. Because of her experiences in the minimum wage job market, Ehrenreich has devoted much of her attention and activist energies to the Economic Hardship Reporting Project, which she helped found to support journalists, sometimes poor themselves, who help focus the national conversation on poverty and the economically insecure in America. They aim at producing feature stories and reporting in major publications, such as newspapers and magazines.

Ehrenreich has written more than a dozen books, many continuing her concern for the difficulties of poverty, including *Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream* (2005). As of 2013 Ehrenreich has been an honorary co-chair of the Democratic Socialists of America as well as being on the editorial board of several political magazines, such as *The Nation*, *Ms.*, *Mother Jones*, and *Harper's*. She has many prestigious awards for her writing, including a Guggenheim Award and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Grant, and she holds honorary degrees from several universities.

EHRENREICH'S RHETORIC

“Is The Middle Class Doomed?” was originally published in the *New York Times* in 1986, so the data that Ehrenreich cites is outdated, but proportionally the numbers from 1986 to 2018 have not improved — indeed they are even more skewed, showing that more wealth is in the hands of even fewer people, and that even less wealth is controlled by a larger percentage of the population. Because the title of the essay is a question, we can see that Ehrenreich’s strategy begins by having us read the essay to see if she can answer the question. At the same time, the title implies that she is asking if we can answer the question, which then actively involves us in the essay from the outset.

But the rhetorical question is only one of Ehrenreich’s rhetorical strategies. She also develops part of the essay through an analysis of circumstances, as in the opening paragraphs where she describes the historical situation after World War II in which

the middle class experienced a period of remarkable growth. The Baby Boomers, those born in the United States between 1946 and 1964, created a large population and subsequent demand for the consumer products that we associate with the middle class. But as the Boomers retire, beginning in 2011, there has been a marked decline in the numbers of the middle class.

It isn't until [paragraph 14](#) that Ehrenreich defines the middle class, and while this is not a central rhetorical strategy, this definition is necessary to make the point of the essay clear. She writes, "Middle-class can be defined in several ways," then explains that statistically, it might be the 20 percent of the population that earns just below the median wage and the 20 percent who earn just above the median wage. But she sees that there is a cultural as well as statistical understanding among many Americans for whom "middle-class status has been defined by home ownership, college education ... and the ability to afford amenities such as a second car and family vacations." Using these definitions, Ehrenreich concluded that the Boomers are not doing as well as their parents, and their children are not doing as well as they did, pointing to factors such as ownership suffering from rising prices and interest rates.

Early in the essay, Ehrenreich uses causal analysis to determine the root of the growth of economic inequality. First, she studies the Boomers and how they helped raise the status of the middle class, but then in [paragraph 16](#) she begins a discussion of public policy changes. She establishes that in the 1960s and 1970s public policy favored a tax system that distributed money

downward, continuing the policies of the 1950s which sometimes taxed upper brackets at a rate as high as 80 percent. But President Reagan introduced a completely different tax program that resulted in “the government’s first major upward redistribution of wealth since World War II.” The top fifth of Americans gained \$25 billion in disposable income, while the bottom fifth lost \$7 billion. But Ehrenreich sees this as only one causal issue. She also sees the prevalence of increased divorce ([para. 17](#)) and changing patterns in marriage ([para. 18](#)) as important contributing factors.

In [paragraph 21](#) Ehrenreich begins to analyze what she calls structural factors in the economy, such as the globalization of industry. Since 1979, 11.5 million jobs that were once staples in the United States moved overseas where lower wage earners supply us with consumer products. Ehrenreich also sees this as a period in which computers began to take over many jobs that had been filled by middle management people and, later, manufacturing employees. The result, she argues in [paragraph 23](#), is a large growth in service economies, a sector where most jobs will not pay enough to sustain the kind of middle-class life Ehrenreich defined earlier. As she says, a lower wage society cannot be an affluent society.

An interesting aspect of economic change has been what Ehrenreich describes as polarization of the wealthy and the poor. As she says, those who are vacationing in Aspen “are likely to prefer a tax cut to an expansion of government services” ([para. 26](#)). The growth of the “new urban upper middle class” needs

workers who are in some ways essentially servants, tending to their needs. This polarization shows up as well in the retail market, with businesses like Nordstrom as well as direct-to-consumer digital startups catering to the wealthy, while K-Mart (which closed 64 stores in 2018), caters to the rest.

Underlying all these rhetorical strategies is Ehrenreich's research, which consists of numerical data collected from government sources as well as citations from a wide variety of experts in economics from universities and government institutions. In this sense Ehrenreich's essay resembles a research paper and offers a good example of how a truly thorough examination of a subject such as the status of the economic and cultural middle class can be. Ehrenreich, because she is trained as a scientist rather than an economist, makes sure that the reader knows she depends on the most authoritative sources she can find.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Barbara Ehrenreich's "Is the Middle Class Doomed?" Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. How well did the middle class do after World War II?
2. What role did the Baby Boomers play in sustaining the middle class?
3. What government tax programs affected the status of the middle class?

Is The Middle Class Doomed?

Most of us are “middle-class,” or so we like to believe. But there are signs that America is becoming a more divided society: over the last decade, the rich have been getting richer; the poor have been getting more numerous; and those in the middle do not appear to be doing as well as they used to. If America is “coming back,” as President Reagan reassured us in the wake of the economic malaise of the early 1980s, it may be coming back in a harsh and alien form.

It was in the late sixties that American society began to lurch off the track leading to the American dream. No one could have known it at the time, but, according to the economists Bennett Harrison, Chris Tilly, and Barry Bluestone,¹ those were the last years in which economic inequality among Americans declined. Since then, in a sharp reversal of the equalizing trend that had been under way since shortly after World War II, the extremes of wealth have grown further apart and the middle has lost ground. In 1984, according to a report by Congress’s Joint Economic Committee, the share of the national income received by the wealthiest 40 percent of families in the United States rose to 67.3 percent, while the poorest 40 percent received 15.7 percent (the smallest share since 1947); the share of the middle 20 percent declined to 17 percent. The tax-revision bill will be of some help to low-income families, but it will by no means alter the overall pattern of income distribution in their favor — or, critics say, halt the trend toward greater inequality.

Some economists have even predicted that the middle class, which has traditionally represented the majority of Americans and defined the nation's identity and goals, will disappear altogether, leaving the country torn, like many Third World societies, between an affluent minority and a horde of the desperately poor.

At least in the area of consumer options, we seem already in the process of becoming a “two-tier society.” The middle is disappearing from the retail industry, for example. Korvettes and Gimbels are gone. Sears, Roebuck and J.C. Penney are anxiously trying to reposition themselves to survive in an ever more deeply segmented market. The stores that are prospering are the ones that have learned to specialize in one extreme of wealth or the other: Nordstrom's and Neiman-Marcus for the affluent; K Mart for those constrained by poverty or thrift. Whether one looks at food, clothing, or furnishings, two cultures are emerging: natural fibers versus synthetics; handcrafted wood cabinets versus mass-produced maple; David's Cookies versus Mister Donuts.

“A democracy, to survive, must at the very least appear to be fair. This is no longer the case in America.”

The political implications of the shift toward a two-tier society — if this is what is really happening — are ominous. Felix Rohatyn,²

the investment banker and civic leader, has observed: “A democracy, to survive, must at the very least appear to be fair. This is no longer the case in America.” We may have outgrown the conceit that America is a uniformly “middle-class” society, but we have expected the extremes of wealth and poverty to be buffered by a vast and stable middle class. If the extremes swell, and if the economic center cannot hold, then our identity and future as a nation may be endangered.

Because the stakes are so high, the subject of class polarization has itself become bitterly polarized. On what could be called the “pessimistic” side is a group of mostly young, though highly acclaimed, economists who tend to be based in the relatively prosperous state of Massachusetts. The other side, which is represented at two research organizations, the Brookings Institution, in Washington, and the Conference Board, in New York City, argues that there are no fundamental flaws in the economy, and that the shift toward greater inequality will be short-lived.

Though much of the debate has been numbingly technical, the differences sometimes seem to have more to do with ideology than statistics. Fabian Linden³ of the Conference Board, for example, says of “the pessimists”: “There are always people who think that this is an imperfect world and has to be changed.... It’s awfully arrogant, if you think about it.”

But no one, however humble, denies that there has been a profound change in the class contours of American society. No matter how you slice up the population — whether you compare

the top fifth to the bottom fifth, or the top 40 percent to the poorest 40 percent — and no matter whether you look at individual earnings or household earnings, the have-nots are getting by on less and the haves are doing better than ever.

The change is particularly striking when families with children are compared over time. In 1968, the poorest one-fifth of such families received 7.4 percent of the total income for all families; in 1983, their share was only 4.8 percent, down by one-third. During the same period, the richest fifth increased its share from 33.8 percent to 38.1 percent. The result, according to the Census Bureau, is that the income gap between the richest families and the poorest is now wider than it has been at any time since the bureau began keeping such statistics in 1947.

So far, the middle class is still a statistical reality. At least a graph of income distribution still comes out as a bell-shaped curve, with most people hovering near the mean income rather than at either extreme. (If the middle class disappeared, the curve would have two humps rather than one in the middle.) But in the last decade, the income distribution curve has slumped toward the lower end and flattened a little on top, so that it begins to look less like a weathered hill and more like a beached whale. To the untrained eye, the shift is not alarming, but as economist Jeff Faux,⁴ president of the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, says: “These numbers are very slow to move, really glacial. So when you do get a change you better pay attention.”

The optimists in the debate attribute the downward shift in earnings chiefly to the baby boomers — the 78-million-member generation that began to crowd into the labor market in the 1960s and '70s, presumably driving down wages by their sheer numbers. As the boomers age, the argument goes, their incomes will rise and America will once again be a solidly middle-class society. But a recent analysis by the economists Bennett Harrison and Chris Tilly at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Barry Bluestone at Boston College suggests that the bulge in the labor force created by the baby boom and business-cycle effects can account for less than one-third of the increase in income inequality that has occurred since 1978.

In fact, baby boomers may find it much more difficult to make their incomes grow over time than did their parents' generation. A study by the economists Frank S. Levy and Richard C. Michel shows that, in earlier decades, men could expect their earnings to increase by about 30 percent as they aged from forty to fifty. But men who became forty in 1973 saw their earnings actually decline by 14 percent by the time they reached fifty. If this trend continues, the baby boomers, the oldest of whom are just now turning forty, will find little solace in seniority.

The fate of the baby boomers is central to the debate about America's economic future in another way, too. Contrary to the popular stereotype, the baby boomers are not all upwardly mobile, fresh-faced consumers of mesquite cuisine and exercise equipment. The baby boom is defined as those born between 1946 and 1964, and only 5 percent of them qualify as "yuppies"

(young urban professional or managerial workers earning over \$30,000 a year each, or \$40,000 or more for a couple). Most of them, like most Americans, are “middle-class,” in the limited sense that they fall somewhere near the middle of the income distribution rather than at either extreme. But they are also young, and whether they can hold on to, or achieve, middle-class status — however defined — is a test of whether the American middle class is still capable of reproducing itself from one generation to the next.

“Middle-class” can be defined in several ways. Statistically, the middle class is simply the part of the population that earns near the median income — say, the 20 percent that earns just above the median income plus the 20 percent whose earnings fall just below it. But in colloquial understanding, “middle-class” is a matter of status as well as income, and is signaled by subtler cues — how we live, what we spend our money on, what expectations we have for the future. Since the postwar period, middle-class status has been defined by home ownership, college education (at least for the children), and the ability to afford amenities such as a second car and family vacations.

In the matter of home ownership, the baby boomers are clearly not doing as well as their parents. Levy and Michel calculate that the typical father of today’s boomers faced housing costs that were equivalent to about 14 percent of his gross monthly pay. In 1984, a thirty-year-old man who purchased a median-priced home had to set aside a staggering 44 percent of his income for carrying charges. The recent decline in interest rates has helped some, but

it has been largely offset by continuing inflation in the price of homes. The problem is not only that housing costs have escalated, but that the median income has actually been declining. According to the National Association of Homebuilders, a family today needs an income of approximately \$37,000 to afford a median-priced home. In 1985, according to newly released census figures, the median family income was \$27,735 —almost \$10,000 short.

If the baby-boom bulge in the work force is not the cause — or sole cause — of America's slide toward greater economic inequality, what is? Public policy is one obvious contributing factor. In the 1960s and early 70s, public policy — and political rhetoric — favored a downward redistribution of wealth. Ronald Reagan reversed the trend and instituted policies that resulted in the government's first major upward redistribution of wealth since World War II. As a result of the combination of reduced taxes for the better-off and reduced social spending for the poor, the richest one-fifth of American families gained \$25 billion in disposable income between 1980 and 1984, while the poorest one-fifth lost \$7 billion. The current tax-revision bill would correct some of these inequities. But at the same time, according to a number of the bill's critics including Richard A. Musgrave,⁵ professor emeritus of political economy at Harvard, it also represents a retreat from the very principle of progressivity in taxation in that it reduces the maximum rate of taxation for the very rich.

The drift toward a two-tier society actually began before the Republicans took office in 1981, and must have been set in

motion by changes that go deeper than political trends. Some of these changes may be more social than economic; divorce, for example, can have the effect of splitting the members of individual families into different social classes. In most cases, the woman ends up with the children and most of the responsibility for supporting them. As a result, according to Lenore J. Weitzman,⁶ author of *The Divorce Revolution*, an ex-wife's disposable income is likely to fall by 73 percent in the year following divorce, while her ex-husband's rises by 42 percent. Single mothers now account for almost half the household heads in poverty.

But if divorce is a factor in the emerging pattern of inequality, so is marriage. Mimi Lieber,⁷ a New York–based marketing consultant who has been following the impact of class polarization on consumer choices, says that we are seeing “a changing pattern of marriage; today, the doctor marries another doctor, not a nurse.” The result is that marriage is less likely to offer women a chance at upward mobility.

On the whole, however, marriage is probably a stabilizing factor, at least if it is a “nontraditional” form of marriage. Seventy percent of baby-boom women are in the work force — compared with about 30 percent in their mothers' generation — and the earnings of working wives are all that hold a growing number of families in the middle class. A study prepared by Sheldon Danziger and Peter Gottschalk⁸ for the Joint Economic Committee of Congress shows that most of the income gains made by white two-parent families with children since 1967 can be accounted for by increased earnings by wives. On a husband's earnings alone, the

average family (of any race) would fall below the median income; on the wife's earnings alone, it would fall to the poverty level of \$10,990 for a family of four.

Whatever else is changing in our patterns of marriage and divorce, something has happened to the average American's ability to support a family. According to Bluestone and Harrison, the economy is simply not generating enough well-paying jobs anymore: between 1963 and 1978, only 23 percent of all new jobs paid poverty-level or "near-poverty-level" wages; but of the new jobs generated between 1978 and 1984, almost half—48 percent — paid near-poverty-level wages. Here again, public policy is partly to blame. The minimum wage has not gone up since 1981, and now amounts to \$6,700 for full-time, year-round work — almost \$4,000 short of the poverty level for a family of four.

There are no doubt deeper — or, as the economists say, "structural"—reasons for the average American's sagging earning power. For one thing, the economy has been "globalized." In some industries, such as garments, toys, and electronics, American workers are competing — directly or indirectly — with Third World workers whose wages are a few dollars per day rather than per hour. In a related development, the American economy has been "deindustrializing," or shifting from manufacturing to services, fast enough to displace 11.5 million Americans from blue-collar jobs (many in highly paid industries, such as auto and steel) since 1979. For the most part, service jobs tend to be lower-paying and nonunionized. Finally, there has been the technological revolution. Computers are eating away at many skilled, mid-level occupations

— middle manager, department store buyers, machinists — as well as traditionally low-paid occupations such as bank teller and telephone operator.

It is on the role of the “structural” changes that the economists are most fiercely divided, and, it seems to me, confused. The optimists insist that the causes of class polarization are more ephemeral than structural — if not the baby-boom bulge, then the strong dollar, or some other factor equally likely to go away by itself. Not long ago, the pessimists were convinced that polarization was the straightforward result of globalization, deindustrialization, and high technology, the combination of which, at least theoretically, could be expected to produce a nation of low-skilled helots⁹ dominated by a tiny technical-managerial elite.

Now some of them are not so sure. “It’s incontestable,” says David Smith,¹⁰ an economist on Senator Edward M. Kennedy’s staff, “that as a service economy, we won’t be able to sustain the level of growth required to maintain our standard of living.” But, he says, recent data suggest that high technology does not necessarily bring about occupational polarization. As for international competition, he asks sarcastically, “Who the hell are we competing with in the insurance industry?”

There is no question, though, that American workers are less able than they were in the recent past to hold their own at the bargaining table — and most of them (the more than 80 percent who are not union members) never even get to the bargaining table. In the last decade, citing the need to compete in the newly

global marketplace, employers have launched an aggressive campaign to cut labor costs, demanding — and frequently getting — wage give-backs, two-tier contracts, and other concessions. While wage-earning workers tighten their belts, top executives are reaping salaries that might once have been considered provocatively high. According to the social critic Michael Harrington:¹¹ “We’re seeing a savage attack on workers’ wages and living standards. In the long run, no one’s going to win because a low-wage society cannot be an affluent society.”

Whatever the reasons for the growing polarization of American society, polarization creates its own dynamics, and perversely, they tend to make things worse, not better. For one thing, the affluent (say, the upper fifth or those with family incomes over \$48,000 a year) do what they can to avoid contact with the desperate and the downwardly mobile. They abandon public services and public spaces — schools, parks, mass transit — which then deteriorate. One result is that the living conditions and opportunities available to the poor (and many in the middle range of income) worsen. And, of course, as the poor sink lower, the affluent have all the more reason to withdraw further into their own “good” neighborhoods and private services.

As the better-off cease to utilize public services, they also tend to withdraw political support for public spending designed to benefit the community as a whole. If you send your children to private school, commute to work by taxi, and find your clean air at Aspen, you are likely to prefer a tax cut to an expansion of government services. This may be one reason for the decline of liberalism

among America's upper middle class. The liberal "effete snobs" that Spiro T. Agnew¹² railed against are as rare today as Republicans on the welfare rolls.

There is another way in which class polarization tends to become self-reinforcing. As the Columbia University economist Saskia Sassen-Koob¹³ says: "The growth of the new urban upper middle class stimulates the proliferation of low-wage jobs. We're seeing the growth in the cities of a kind of 'servant class' that prepares the gourmet take-out food for the wealthy, stitches their designer clothes, and helps manufacture their customized furniture."

Traditional middle-class patterns of consumption, she notes, had a more egalitarian impact. "When everyone bought their furniture at Sears and their food at the A & P, they were generating employment for workers in mass-production industries that were likely to be unionized and to pay well." In contrast, today's upscale consumer shops are boutique-scale outlets for items that are produced, or prepared, by relatively small, nonunionized companies.

The polarization of the extremes — the urban upper-middle class versus the "underclass" — inevitably makes it harder for those in the middle range of income to survive. As the rich get richer, they are able to bid up the costs of goods that middle-income people also consume, particularly housing. Wildly inflated housing costs hurt the affluent upper fifth, too, but they are far more likely than middle-income people to be able to command salary increases to match their escalating cost of living.

For those in the “new collar class,” as Ralph Whitehead, Jr.,¹⁴ a University of Massachusetts professor, terms the nonyuppie plurality of baby boomers, a mortgage may be out of reach, much less a designer style of consumption. But we are all subjected to the blandishments of the booming market for upscale goods.

To be demonstrably “middle-class” in today’s culture, a family needs ... some of the regalia of the well-advertised upscale life-style

To be demonstrably “middle-class” in today’s culture, a family needs not only the traditional house and car, but at least some of the regalia of the well-advertised upscale life-style — beers that cost five dollars a six-pack for guests, and sixty-dollar sweat-shirts for the teenage and preteen children. In order to be “middle-class” as our culture is coming to understand the term, one almost has to be rich.

So far, the hard-pressed families in the middle range of income have found a variety of ways to cope. They delay child-bearing; and, even after the children come, both spouses are likely to hold jobs. They are ingenious about finding K Mart look-alikes for Bloomingdale’s status goods; and, for the really big expenditures, they are likely to turn to parents for help. But these stratagems have their own costs, one of them being leisure for the kind of family life many of us were raised to expect. “We are seeing the

standard two-income family,” says Ethel Klein,¹⁵ a Columbia University political-science professor, “and the next step will probably be the three-income family, with the husband having to take a second job in order to keep up.”

Karl Marx¹⁶ predicted that capitalist society would eventually be torn apart by the conflict between a greedy bourgeoisie and a vast, rebellious proletariat. He did not foresee the emergence, within capitalism, of a mass middle class that would mediate between the extremes and create a stable social order. But with that middle class in apparent decline and with the extremes diverging further from each other, it would be easy to conclude that the Marxist vision at last fits America’s future.

But America is unique in ways that still make any prediction foolhardy. For one thing, Americans are notorious for their lack of class consciousness or even class awareness. In the face of the most brutal personal dislocations, we lack a vocabulary to express our dismay. Furthermore, at least at this point, we seem to lack political leadership capable of articulating both the distress of the have-nots and the malaise in the middle.

Thus there is no sure way to predict which way America’s embattled middle class will turn. Some groups that are being displaced from the middle class seem to be moving leftward. Downwardly mobile single mothers, for example, may have helped create the gender gap that emerged, for the first time, in 1980 and was still prominent in the 1984 election, in which a greater proportion of women than men voted for the losing

Democratic ticket. But the nation's debt-ridden farmers, another formerly middle-class group, have gone in all directions: some responding to Jesse Jackson's liberal populist message; others moving toward extreme right-wing fringe groups. The financially squeezed middle-income baby boomers are perhaps the most enigmatic of all. After much lush speculation as to their political inclinations, we know only that they tend to be liberal on social issues and more conservative on economic issues, and that they admire both Ronald Reagan and Bruce Springsteen.

Only at the extremes of wealth is political behavior becoming true to Marxist form. Thomas Byrne Edsall, author of *The New Politics of Inequality*, has documented an "extraordinary intensification of class-voting" in the eighties as compared with the previous two decades. For example, in 1956 Dwight D. Eisenhower won by nearly the same margin in all income groups, but in 1980 Reagan won among the rich but was soundly rejected by those in the bottom 40 percent of the income distribution. Party affiliation is becoming equally polarized, with the haves more monolithically Republican than at any time since the 1930s, and the have-nots more solidly Democratic.

It is not clear that either party, though, is willing to advance the kinds of programs that might halt America's slide toward a two-tier society. Admittedly, it will be hard to get at the fundamental causes of class polarization until we know what they are. But there is no question that the dominant policy direction of the last few years has only exacerbated the trend. If we want to avert the polarization of American society, there is no choice, it seems to

me, but to use public policy to redistribute wealth, and opportunity, downward again: not from the middle class to the poor, as Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society programs tended to do, but from the very rich to everyone else.

We could start, for example, by raising the minimum wage, which would not only help the working poor but would also have a buoyant effect on middle-level wages. We could enact long-overdue measures, such as national health insurance and a system of subsidized child care, to help struggling young families. We could institute tax reforms that would both generate income for federal spending *and* relieve those in the middle brackets. A truly progressive income tax, combined with more generous public spending for education and social-welfare programs, would go a long way toward smoothing out the widening inequalities of opportunity.

Everyone has a stake in creating a less anxious, more egalitarian society. In fact, from the point of view of the currently affluent, the greatest danger is not that a class-conscious, left-leaning political alternative will arise, but that it will not. For without a potent political alternative, we are likely to continue our slide toward a society divided between the hungry and the overfed, the hopeless and the have-it-alls. What is worse, there will be no mainstream, peaceable political outlets for the frustration of the declining middle class or the desperation of those at the bottom. Instead, it is safe to predict that there will be more crime, more exotic forms of political and religious sectarianism, and ultimately, that we will no longer be one nation, but two.

■ ■ ■ ■ QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What evidence suggests class polarization?
2. When was the middle class strongest in the United States?
3. Who are the Baby Boomers?
4. How does Ehrenreich define the middle class?
5. Why did people think the middle class would improve as Baby Boomers aged?
6. What is upward distribution of wealth?
7. What role does globalization play in helping or hurting the middle class?

■ ■ ■ ■ QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. While Ehrenreich admits that there is no absolute definition of the middle class, she does offer some ways of producing a working definition ([para. 14](#)). But her definitions are not as specific as they might be. In an essay that relies on your observations as well as on your readings of current reports on the status of the middle class (research online and in the library) write your own definition of the middle class. Ask some of your peers how they would define the middle class as well as whether or not they think they are themselves middle class. Do you believe you belong to the middle class? Why or why not?
2. Ehrenreich asks a big question: Is the middle class doomed? First, how do you feel she has answered that question? Explain what she considers the answer to be. Then, answer this question yourself, relying first on your own economic observations and second on the reports you see in the popular press and on social media. In addition to these sources, you might conduct your own poll and ask people whether they feel that the middle class is doomed as well as what

evidence they have to back up their views. What evidence have you gathered that will support your answer?

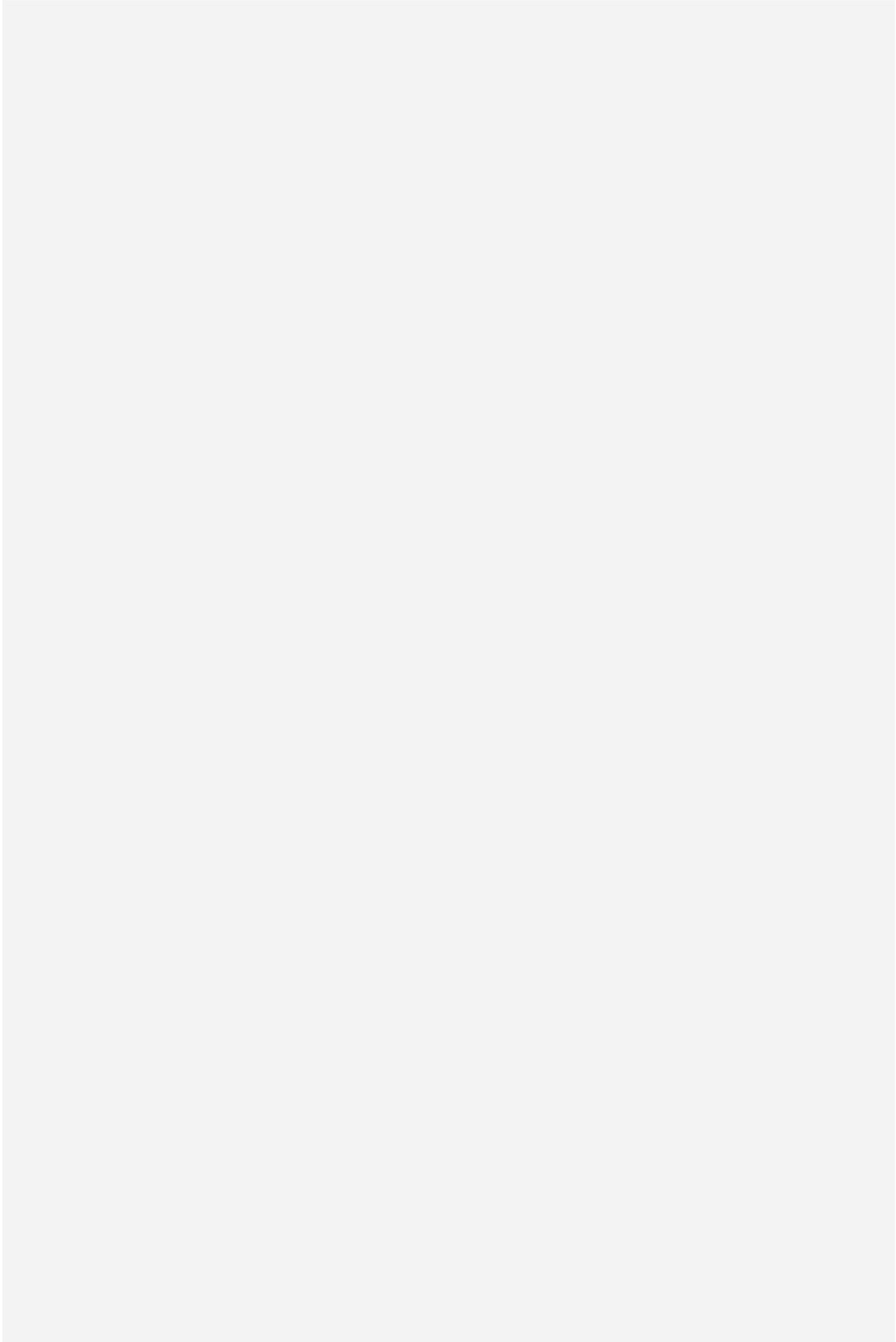
3. In [paragraphs 16](#) and [17](#) Ehrenreich describes the tax changes that were put into place by President Ronald Reagan. In a brief essay present the details of that tax plan and research the reactions in the press in 1982 and thereafter. What was the promise of those tax cuts, and how well did they perform? Did the middle class benefit from those cuts? Are the conclusions Ehrenreich arrived at accurate or not? What is your view of the power of the tax cuts? What is your view of the most recent tax cuts in the United States?
4. Ehrenreich's numerical data is based on information available in 1986. Write an essay that updates the numbers that she relies upon for her judgment. Use online sources to search for the percent of housing costs that must be borne by a homeowner. Find new numbers for the median income at various economic levels — 75th percentile, 50th percentile, 25th percentile — in current dollars. Look up the minimum wage in various occupations. Once you have assembled your data, analyze it in order to decide whether or not we should be optimistic about the survival of the middle class.
5. The question of the polarization of society was rising in importance when Ehrenreich first wrote this essay. How has the question of polarization changed between then and now? In an essay that relies as much as possible on public information from the press and the government, explain whether or not the polarization of American society is more or less serious than it was in 1986. What forms does it take, and what factors might be driving it? Are the differences more obvious in housing, education, retail, or other social and cultural institutions? What are your personal views on polarization in modern society?

CONNECTIONS

1. Compare the main points Ehrenreich makes in this essay with the major points in Francis Fukuyama's "[Why Did Democracy Spread?](#)". Fukuyama talks about the importance for the existence of a healthy

middle class in order to guarantee the existence of a democracy. To what extent does Ehrenreich seem to agree with Fukuyama? What is her attitude toward democracy in her essay? Do her views, along with her data, support a position that might fear the loss of both the middle class and democratic society? Does Fukuyama seem aware of the potential for a polarized society? Do you think Ehrenreich is optimistic or pessimistic about the future of democracy?

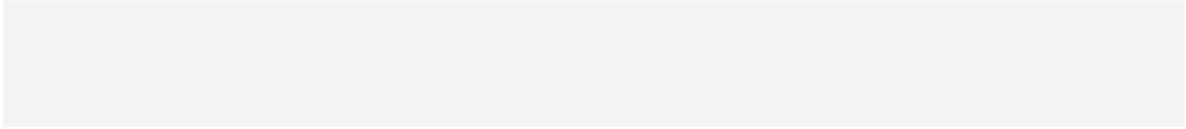
2. Review the position of [Karl Marx](#) regarding the existence, if any, of a middle class. Ehrenreich seems worried that the middle class will disappear. Would Marx share her concerns? How would Marx critique Ehrenreich's views of social class? What did he view as the reason for the polarization of society? Would Ehrenreich be likely to be sympathetic to Marx, or would she have found his explanations to be inadequate? What is Marx's solution for society's ills? What are Ehrenreich's?



Reflections on the Nature of Culture

Now that you have read the selections in “Culture,” consider how these writers have further informed your views of your own culture.

1. To what extent do you feel you belong to a specific cultural group within the larger culture?
2. How does the way you formulate questions about cultural behavior inform the conclusions you arrive at?
3. How aware are you of your own specific cultural assumptions?
4. To what extent do these essays help you qualify your assumptions about gender and sexuality?
5. What are the most important issues facing the middle class today?
6. Is violence unavoidable when an oppressed group pushes for equality?
7. Do you think cultural change happens revolutionarily or evolutionarily?
8. How do shifts in cultural values regarding women affect changes in our society?
9. How convinced are you that equal opportunity must be achieved in our culture?
10. What are the most important clashes in values currently shaping our culture?



Part Three WEALTH

ADAM SMITH

KARL MARX

ANDREW CARNEGIE

F. A. HAYEK

ROBERT B. REICH

ROBIN WALL KIMMERER

DAMBISA MOYO

Introduction

In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of.

—CONFUCIUS (551?–479? B.C.E.)

Wealth is the slave of a wise man. The master of a fool.

—SENECA (4 B.C.E.–65 C.E.)

Great eagerness in the pursuit of wealth, pleasure, or honor, cannot exist without sin.

—DESIDERIUS ERASMUS (1466–1536)

Wealth is the ability to fully experience life.

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU (1817–1862)

If you want to know what a man is really like, take notice of how he acts when he loses money.

—SIMONE WEIL (1909–1943)

The only question with wealth is what you do with it.

—JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER (1839–1937)

Nothing is more admirable than the fortitude with which millionaires tolerate the disadvantages of their wealth.

—REX STOUT (1886–1975)

Bottom line is, I didn't return to Apple to make a fortune. I've been very lucky in my life and already have one. When I was 25, my net worth was \$100 million or so. I decided then that I wasn't going to let it ruin my life. There's no way you could ever spend it all, and I don't view wealth as something that validates my intelligence.

—STEVE JOBS (1955–2011)

Ancient writers talk about wealth in terms of a surplus of necessary or desirable goods and products. After the invention of coins — which historians attribute to the Lydians, whose civilization flourished in the eastern Mediterranean region from 800 to 200 B.C.E. — wealth also became associated with money. However, the relationship of wealth to money has long been debated. According to Aristotle, people misunderstand wealth when they think of it as “only a quantity of coin.” For him, money was useful primarily as a means of representing and purchasing goods but was not sustaining in and of itself.

Writers like Aristotle have argued that wealth benefits the state by ensuring stability, growth, security, and cultural innovations and that it benefits the individual by providing leisure time, mobility, and luxury. Most societies, however, have struggled with the problems caused by unequal distribution of wealth, either among individuals or between citizens and the state. The Spartan leader Lycurgus is said to have tackled the problem in the ninth century B.C.E. by convincing the inhabitants of the Greek city-state of Sparta that they needed to redistribute their wealth. Land and household goods were redistributed among the citizens, and Lycurgus was hailed as a hero. However, Lycurgus’s model has not been the norm in subsequent civilizations, and questions about the nature of wealth and its role and distribution in society have persisted.

The selections in this section present ideas on wealth and poverty from a variety of perspectives. Adam Smith writes during the beginnings of the industrial revolution, when laborers began to

move off of the farm. Karl Marx expounds on what he feels are the corrosive effects of excessive wealth on the individual and the problems caused by unequal distribution of wealth between laborers and business owners. Andrew Carnegie, himself an extremely wealthy business owner, and Robert B. Reich further investigate the problems that an unequal distribution of wealth poses for society as a whole. Robin Kimmerer takes a totally different approach, examining a gift economy inspired by her ancestors, the Potawatomi people. Dambisa Moyo concerns herself with the ways in which economic growth can make life better for the individual, while economic contraction can make life more difficult.

Adam Smith (1723–1790) was known originally as a moral philosopher with a professorship at Glasgow, but he wrote at a time of extraordinary expansion in Great Britain. As industrial power grew in the late eighteenth century, England became wealthier and began to dominate trade in important areas of commerce. In his own mind, Smith's interest in wealth may have been connected with his studies in morality, or it may have grown from his considerable curiosity about a broad range of subjects. Regardless, he produced one of the century's most important and extensive books on economics, *The Wealth of Nations*. It is still consulted by economists today.

Smith's "The Value of Labor" is an attempt to understand the relationship between what he calls the master, which we would call the employer, and labor, which we would call the worker. His emphasis on the value of the laborer is important because in

Smith's time land was considered the most important value because it produced goods and sustained the population. The value of labor was less clear. His purpose was to explain that labor was becoming of considerable value as the economy became industrial. Therefore it was important for the master to pay a laborer more than enough for him to simply exist. In order to provide more laborers in the future, the laborer must have enough income to keep a wife and four children. Smith speaks so directly about this that it almost seems as if he is warning skinflint masters that paying their laborers too little will in the long run work against their own interests.

Karl Marx's (1818–1883) *Communist Manifesto* clarifies the relationship between a people's condition and the economic system in which they live. Marx saw that capitalism provided opportunities for the wealthy and powerful to take advantage of labor. He argued that because labor cannot efficiently sell its product, management can keep labor in perpetual economic bondage.

Marx knew poverty firsthand, but one of his close associates, Friedrich Engels, who collaborated on portions of the *Manifesto*, was the son of a factory owner and so was able to observe closely how the rich can oppress the poor. For both of them, the economic system of capitalism produced a class struggle between the rich (bourgeoisie) and the laboring classes (proletariat).

In an effort to avoid a class struggle between the rich and the poor, Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919) wrote *The Gospel of Wealth*,

defending not only the economic system that permitted a few people to amass great wealth but also praising it for being the highest expression of civilization. Carnegie dismisses communism as a failed system and cites Darwinian theories as supporting the laws of competition and accumulation that permitted men like him to possess vast fortunes. His proposal is that such men should give their wealth back to the community for its benefit in the form of institutions that would contribute to “the improvement of the race.” Moreover, the rich should give their money away while they are living so that they can clearly guide their gifts in the directions they feel are most important. Carnegie, for example, concentrated on building public libraries throughout the United States and Canada, while founding a university and supporting others generously.

Friedrich A. Hayek (1899–1992) also opposed the views of Karl Marx and supported capitalism. Hayek taught at the University of Chicago in the 1950s and represents a conservative view of economics. For Hayek, the threat was socialism, or even early steps toward a socialist economy. Hayek, an Austrian, lived in Europe in the early years of the rise of fascism, which began, he asserts, with socialism and ended with totalitarianism. The problem, Hayek asserts, is that socialism involves central planning of the economy, and whoever does the planning is certain to become dictatorial. He argues that social planning robs citizens of their independence and freedom to either succeed or fail. Moreover, planned economies rob the people of choice, both of products and of careers.

Robert B. Reich (b. 1946), a lecturer at Harvard University until he was appointed secretary of labor in the first Clinton administration, has taught courses in economics and published widely. His 1991 book, *The Work of Nations*, echoes the title of Adam Smith's eighteenth-century masterpiece of capitalist theory, *The Wealth of Nations*. Although Reich's views on labor are distinct from Smith's, his essay focuses on labor with the same intensity Smith brings to money. His views consider how worldwide economic developments will affect labor in the next decades. According to Reich, labor falls into three groups — routine workers, in-person servers, and symbolic analysts — each of which will fare differently in the coming years.

Robin Kimmerer is not an economist, and she approaches the concept of the distribution of wealth in a fundamentally different way than the other authors in this section. She is a professor of botany at the State of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, as well as a founding member of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment. Her focus is on ecology and natural resources, and as a member of the Potawatomi Nation she brings the perspective of her indigenous American heritage to the question of economy. She describes a gift economy centered on the gifts of nature. She is aware of the power of the market economy that we live with, but she also demonstrates that there is considerable virtue in a gift economy in which people share and do their best to nurture the environment and avoid its exploitation. Kimmerer stands in marked contrast to most of the writers who concern themselves with everyday

economic problems, and reading her work is a reminder of how to think outside of the economic frameworks we are used to.

Dambisa Moyo, one of the only professional economists in this section, focuses on the ways in which a growth economy affects the individual as well as the community. At the same time, she shows how a contracting economy, such as the economies of the American Rust Belt and the Appalachian region, have given rise to a populist movement and political instability. She points to the effects of contracting economies in Catalonia and Greece, but she also shows how individuals can contribute to their local economy in order to keep it healthy. Her views are related to the ideas that both Adam Smith and Andrew Carnegie explore.

Most of these theorists agree that a healthy economy can relieve the misery and suffering of a population. Most agree that wealth and plenty are preferable to impoverishment and want. But some are also concerned with the effects of materialism and greed on the spiritual life of a nation.

Some Considerations about the Nature of Wealth

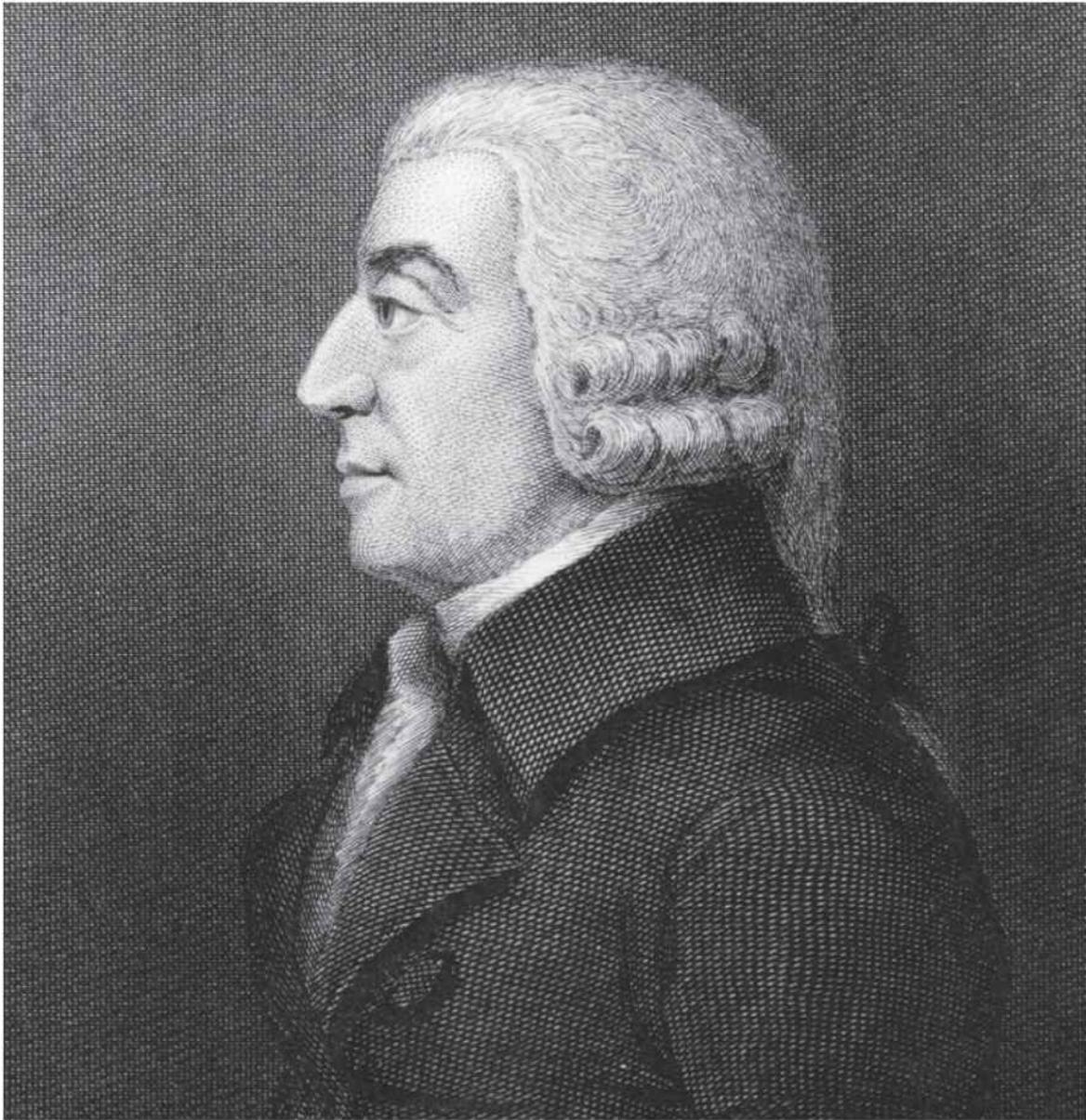
Before reading the selections that follow in this section, consider what your views of wealth are. Reflect on the following questions and write out your responses. Discuss your answers with your classmates.

1. Should there be limits on how much a chief executive officer (CEO) should earn in relation to the average worker?
2. Is economic inequality a serious problem in our time?
3. How does economic inequality affect the nature of our democracy?
4. Should there be a different tax structure for the ultra-rich?

5. Who benefits most from the social programs of modern governments?
6. Should government support education, health programs, and welfare for the poor?
7. What is the best way to measure wealth? What are the positives, but also the limitations, of assigning monetary value to things?
8. Is there a difference between the working class and the middle class?
9. To what extent do programs, such as Social Security and welfare, rob the citizen of independence?
10. Why is the overall growth of the economy important for the individual?



Adam Smith *The Value of Labor*



Hulton Deutsch/Corbis Historical/Getty Images

ADAM SMITH (1723–1790) was born in Kirkcaldy on the eastern coast of Scotland. He attended Glasgow University and received a degree from Oxford, after which he gave a successful series of lectures on rhetoric in his hometown. This resulted in his appointment as professor of logic at Glasgow in 1751. One year later, he moved to a professorship in moral philosophy that had

been vacated by Thomas Craggie, one of his former teachers. He held this position for twelve years. Smith's early reputation was built entirely on his work in moral philosophy, which included theology, ethics, justice, and political economy.

In many ways, Adam Smith's views are striking in their modernity; in fact, his work continues to inform our understanding of current economic trends. His classic and best-known book, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), examines the economic system of the modern nation that has reached, as England had, the commercial level of progress. According to Smith, a nation has to pass through a number of levels of culture — from hunter-gatherer to commercial — on its way to becoming modern. In this sense, he was something of an evolutionist in economics.

Wealth of Nations is quite different in both tone and concept from Smith's earlier success, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). The earlier work postulates a social order based, in part, on altruism — an order in which individuals aid one another — whereas *Wealth of Nations* asserts that the best economic results are obtained when individuals work for their own interests and their own gain. This kind of effort, Smith assures us, results in the general improvement of a society because the industry of the individual benefits everyone in the nation by producing more wealth; the greater the wealth of the nation, the better the lot of every individual in the nation.

There is no question that Smith was an ardent capitalist who felt an almost messianic need to spread the doctrine of capitalism. He maintained throughout his life that *Wealth of Nations* was one with his writings on moral and social issues and that when his work was complete it would encompass the basic elements of any society.

In *Wealth of Nations* Smith outlines a microcosm of the progress of capitalism as he understood it. His purpose is to establish the steps by which a nation creates its wealth and a region becomes wealthy. For the most part, he is interested in the development of capitalism in Great Britain, including his native Scotland. His perspective includes the natural developments that he observed in his own time in the late eighteenth century as well as developments that he could imagine from earlier times. Because he wrote and published his book during the industrial revolution and just before the American Revolution, his primary concerns are farming and agriculture. In earlier sections of the book, Smith focused on metal — silver and gold — as a measure of wealth, then later on corn (by which he usually meant wheat or barley) as a measure of wealth. In this selection, he is more emphatic about labor and its relationship with wealth.

His primary point is related to what he sees as a natural progression. People in the country have land on which they plant crops, which they sell, in part, to people in the town. The people in the town, lacking land but possessing skills such as weaving, building, and the like, create a market for the goods from the country. They take the product of the land and, with the surplus

beyond their daily needs for food and sustenance, manufacture useful goods. In turn, they sell the desirable goods to people in the country, and both manage to accumulate wealth in the process. In this view the manufactures of the town are important but by no means as essential as the food that sustains the nation. Indeed, Smith regards surplus production as the key to the move toward wealth, which accumulates into opulence.

It is interesting that Smith does not emphasize trade among nations. He seems a bit uneasy in contemplating the usefulness of international trade as a means to accumulate wealth. Land is secure, controllable, and not likely to yield to the whimsy of foul winds, leaky ships, or dishonest merchants. One realizes that regardless of what he might say in praise of other possibilities, Smith himself would likely prefer a life in the country on a spread of his own land, collecting rent from tenants who produce food and flax and other goods that produce wealth.

SMITH'S RHETORIC

Adam Smith is widely regarded as one of the most influential economic thinkers of the eighteenth century. His *Wealth of Nations* is a gigantic book with many complex arguments regarding the nature of money and the role of capital in trade. This selection is a relatively straightforward statement regarding what he feels is the usual progress that all nations experience in the creation and accumulation of wealth. However, the normal eighteenth-century paragraph is much longer than those of today. By the same token, the normal eighteenth-century sentence is

more complex than we are used to today. For that reason, many readers will pause for reflection as they read Smith's work.

Still, his sentences are ultimately clear and direct. His opening sentence, for example, is a mighty declaration: "But though in disputes with their workmen, masters must generally have the advantage, there is however a certain rate below which it seems impossible to reduce, for any considerable time, the ordinary wages even of the lowest species of labor." In this sentence Smith makes a clear pronouncement, a statement about labor of every kind. Such a sweeping generalization is likely to invite attack and skepticism, but he feels secure in his assertion and proceeds to argue his position point by point. On a more modest note, when Smith says, "A man must always live by his work, and his wages must at least be sufficient to maintain him" ([para. 2](#)), he establishes his view that labor is valuable and that wages must recognize the virtue of preserving it.

Smith then gives a curious analysis of the ways in which the supply of labor must be maintained. He estimates that the wages of a common laborer must be twice as much as he needs just to survive himself. Because it is desirable that a laborer be married and that he have at least four children (because two will naturally die), the labor of the husband and wife must be enough to ensure replacement of them by their children. Curiously, Smith makes a comparison between the English laborer and the "able-bodied slave," whose maintenance is also designed to keep him productive. This lowest rate of twice what a single man needs, Smith assures us, is "consistent with common humanity" ([para. 3](#)).

In these paragraphs Smith establishes himself as concerned for the welfare of the laborer rather than declaring himself as a friend of the master.

In some cases, he observes, the master is not entirely at an advantage. When more laborers are needed than are readily available, the masters cannot join together to limit wages. They must compete with each other and offer higher wages. However, Smith points out, there is a limit to the laborer's wage, and that is the amount of funds available to pay the wages. In other words, the master must have enough profits to permit paying those who perform the labor.

Smith's view on the value of labor reflects an aspect of his conservatism, a stance that remains recognizably conservative even by today's standards. Nevertheless, his principles have guided traders, farmers, and laborers for more than two hundred years. In his time, workers in agriculture outnumbered workers in manufactures by a factor of eighty or ninety. But workers in agriculture have decreased progressively since the industrial revolution. Now, as a result of more efficient farming methods, only two or three people out of a hundred work on farms producing food and other goods. It would be interesting to know how Smith might react to this dramatic shift in occupations.

Smith depends on clear, step-by-step argument to hold the attention of his reader. He establishes and examines each major point, clarifies his own position, then moves on to the next related point. For example, he talks about the results of a "monied man"

([para. 6](#)) earning more than he needs to maintain his own family; he will employ “either the whole or a part of the surplus in maintaining one or more menial servants” while an “independent workman” will in the same situation employ a journeyman to produce more goods and increase his wealth. In short, Smith is giving directions for increasing wealth. Throughout, however, he has his eye on increasing the wealth of the nation through careful maintenance of a stock of laborers.

It is also worth noting that when Smith talks about the American colonies, he reminds the reader that there is plenty of land for people to work. As a result, little or no manufacture is produced for sale abroad. He sees this as an indication that the Americans are fiercely independent, demanding land of their own to guarantee that they will have adequate sustenance in the future. He sees North America as a growing economy likely to produce great wealth. By contrast, he sees China as a wealthy nation that seems to have reached its limit and is not likely to grow. He bases his view in part on the travels of Marco Polo, which many centuries earlier revealed a country that seemed not to have changed in Smith’s times. Throughout the selection Smith establishes a clear sense of the progress of nations toward the accumulation of wealth, and he provides the reader with a blueprint for financial success.



PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Adam Smith’s “The Value of Labor.” Keeping them in

mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What is the nature of the relationship of master to laborer?
2. What does Smith think is the natural order of things in the development of commerce?

From An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations.

The Value of Labor

But though in disputes with their workmen, masters must generally have the advantage, there is however a certain rate below which it seems impossible to reduce, for any considerable time, the ordinary wages even of the lowest species of labor.

A man must always live by his work, and his wages must at least be sufficient to maintain him. They must even upon most occasions be somewhat more; otherwise it would be impossible for him to bring up a family, and the race of such workmen could not last beyond the first generation. Mr. Cantillon¹ seems, upon this account, to suppose that the lowest species of common laborers must everywhere earn at least double their own maintenance, in order that one with another they may be enabled to bring up two children; the labor of the wife, on account of her necessary attendance on the children, being supposed no more than sufficient to provide for herself. But one-half the children born, it is computed, die before the age of manhood. The poorest laborers, therefore, according to this account, must, one with another, attempt to rear at least four children, in order that two may have an equal chance of living to that age. But the necessary maintenance of four children, it is supposed, may be nearly equal to that of one man. The labor of an able-bodied slave, the same author adds, is computed to be worth double his maintenance; and that of the meanest laborer, he thinks, cannot be worth less than that of an able-bodied slave. Thus far at least seems certain, that, in order to bring up a family, the labor of the husband and

wife together must, even in the lowest species of common labor, be able to earn something more than what is precisely necessary for their own maintenance; but in what proportion, whether in that above mentioned, or in any other, I shall not take upon me to determine.

There are certain circumstances, however, which sometimes give the laborers an advantage, and enable them to raise their wages considerably above this rate; evidently the lowest which is consistent with common humanity.

When in any country the demand for those who live by wages; laborers, journeymen, servants of every kind, is continually increasing; when every year furnishes employment for a greater number than had been employed the year before, the workmen have no occasion to combine in order to raise their wages. The scarcity of hands occasions a competition among masters, who bid against one another, in order to get workmen, and thus voluntarily break through the natural combination of masters not to raise wages.

The demand for those who live by wages, it is evident, cannot increase but in proportion to the increase of the funds which are destined for the payment of wages. These funds are of two kinds; first, the revenue which is over and above what is necessary for the maintenance; and, secondly, the stock which is over and above what is necessary for the employment of their masters.

When the landlord, annuitant, or monied man, has a greater revenue than what he judges sufficient to maintain his own family, he employs either the whole or a part of the surplus in maintaining one or more menial servants. Increase this surplus, and he will naturally increase the number of those servants.

When an independent workman, such as a weaver or shoemaker, has got more stock than what is sufficient to purchase the materials of his own work, and to maintain himself till he can dispose of it, he naturally employs one or more journeymen with the surplus, in order to make a profit by their work. Increase this surplus, and he will naturally increase the number of his journeymen.

The demand for those who live by wages, therefore, necessarily increases with the increase of the revenue and stock of every country, and cannot possibly increase without it. The increase of revenue and stock is the increase of national wealth. The demand for those who live by wages, therefore, naturally increases with the increase of national wealth, and cannot possibly increase without it.

It is not the actual greatness of national wealth, but its continual increase, which occasions a rise in the wages of labor. It is not, accordingly, in the richest countries, but in the most thriving, or in those which are growing rich the fastest, that the wages of labor are highest. England is certainly, in the present times, a much richer country than any part of North America. The wages of labor, however, are much higher in North America than in any part of

England. In the province of New York, common laborers earn three shillings and sixpence currency, equal to two shillings sterling, a day; ship carpenters, ten shillings and sixpence currency, with a pint of rum worth sixpence sterling, equal in all to six shillings and sixpence sterling; house carpenters and bricklayers, eight shillings currency, equal to four shillings and sixpence sterling; journeymen tailors, five shillings currency, equal to about two shillings and ten pence sterling. These prices are all above the London price; and wages are said to be as high in the other colonies as in New York. The price of provisions is everywhere in North America much lower than in England. A dearth has never been known there. In the worst seasons, they have always had a sufficiency for themselves, though less for exportation. If the money price of labor, therefore, be higher than it is anywhere in the mother country, its real price, the real command of the necessaries and conveniencies of life which it conveys to the laborer, must be higher in a still greater proportion.

But though North America is not yet so rich as England, it is much more thriving, and advancing with much greater rapidity to the further acquisition of riches. The most decisive mark of the prosperity of any country is the increase of the number of its inhabitants. In Great Britain, and most other European countries, they are not supposed to double in less than five hundred years. In the British colonies in North America, it has been found, that they double in twenty or five-and-twenty years. Nor in the present times is this increase principally owing to the continual importation of new inhabitants, but to the great multiplication of the species. Those who live to old age, it is said, frequently see there from fifty

to a hundred, and sometimes many more, descendants from their own body. Labor is there so well rewarded that a numerous family of children, instead of being a burthen is a source of opulence and prosperity to the parents. The labor of each child, before it can leave their house, is computed to be worth a hundred pounds clear gain to them. A young widow with four or five young children, who, among the middling or inferior ranks of people in Europe, would have so little chance for a second husband, is there frequently courted as a sort of fortune. The value of children is the greatest of all encouragements to marriage. We cannot, therefore, wonder that the people in North America should generally marry very young. Notwithstanding the great increase occasioned by such early marriages, there is a continual complaint of the scarcity of hands in North America. The demand for laborers, the funds destined for maintaining them, increase, it seems, still faster than they can find laborers to employ.

The demand for those who live by wages, therefore, necessarily increases with the increase of the revenue and stock of every country, and cannot possibly increase without it.

Though the wealth of a country should be very great, yet if it has been long stationary, we must not expect to find the wages of labor very high in it. The funds destined for the payment of wages,

the revenue and stock of its inhabitants, may be of the greatest extent; but if they have continued for several centuries of the same, or very nearly of the same extent, the number of laborers employed every year could easily supply, and even more than supply, the number wanted the following year. There could seldom be any scarcity of hands, nor could the masters be obliged to bid against one another in order to get them. The hands, on the contrary, would, in this case, naturally multiply beyond their employment. There would be a constant scarcity of employment, and the laborers would be obliged to bid against one another in order to get it. If in such a country the wages of labor had ever been more than sufficient to maintain the laborer, and to enable him to bring up a family, the competition of the laborers and the interest of the masters would soon reduce them to this lowest rate which is consistent with common humanity. China has been long one of the richest, that is, one of the most fertile, best cultivated, most industrious, and most populous countries in the world. It seems, however, to have been long stationary. Marco Polo, who visited it more than five hundred years ago, describes its cultivation, industry, and populousness, almost in the same terms in which they are described by travelers in the present times. It had perhaps, even long before his time, acquired that full complement of riches which the nature of its laws and institutions permits it to acquire. The accounts of all travelers, inconsistent in many other respects, agree in the low wages of labor, and in the difficulty which a laborer finds in bringing up a family in China. If by digging the ground a whole day he can get what will purchase a small quantity of rice in the evening, he is contented. The condition of artificers is, if possible, still worse. Instead of waiting

indolently in their workhouses, for the calls of their customers, as in Europe, they are continually running about the streets with the tools of their respective trades, offering their service, and as it were begging employment. The poverty of the lower ranks of people in China far surpasses that of the most beggarly nations in Europe. In the neighborhood of Canton many hundred, it is commonly said, many thousand families have no habitation on the land, but live constantly in little fishing boats upon the rivers and canals. The subsistence which they find there is so scanty that they are eager to fish up the nastiest garbage thrown overboard from any European ship. Any carrion, the carcass of a dead dog or cat, for example, though half putrid and stinking, is as welcome to them as the most wholesome food to the people of other countries. Marriage is encouraged in China, not by the profitableness of children, but by the liberty of destroying them. In all great towns several are every night exposed in the street, or drowned like puppies in the water. The performance of this horrid office is even said to be the avowed business by which some people earn their subsistence.

China, however, though it may perhaps stand still, does not seem to go backwards. Its towns are nowhere deserted by their inhabitants. The lands which had once been cultivated are nowhere neglected. The same or very nearly the same annual labor must therefore continue to be performed, and the funds destined for maintaining it must not, consequently, be sensibly diminished. The lowest class of laborers, therefore, notwithstanding their scanty subsistence, must some way or

another make shift to continue their race so far as to keep up their usual numbers.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. Why, according to Adam Smith, must a laborer earn enough to “maintain him[self]” ([para. 2](#))?
2. What seems to have been the economic value of children in Smith’s time? Was this value universal, or did it depend on where the children lived?
3. In Smith’s view, how did labor in North America differ from that in Great Britain?
4. According to Smith, when masters get surplus money, what do they usually do?
5. How does Smith value labor?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Adam Smith talks about North America’s population growth and the value of children to the economy. Today, the United States has low population growth and relatively few children. What is the average age of Americans today? What is the primary source of population growth in the United States? What is the economic value of children today? Write a brief essay that updates Smith’s concept of the economic circumstances of the United States.
2. The emphasis on wages in relation to the availability of money leads Smith to say that the minimum needed for a laborer is enough to keep him alive and to ensure that he has children who will replace him when he dies. What are the minimum needs of a laborer in today’s economy? What must the laborer’s wages pay for if the laborer is to satisfy the normal daily needs of a modern citizen? Consider what you feel are the needs of a middle-class family with

two working parents. Do current wages seem to satisfy the needs of a laborer today?

3. Smith talks about the minimum needs of labor, but he never mentions the idea of a minimum wage. The first minimum wage law in the United States was enacted in 1933, but in 1935 the Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional. In 1941, the Supreme Court reviewed the Fair Labor Standards Act and approved the minimum wage. What is your view on the minimum wage today? Is it possible that it is unconstitutional? What effect does a minimum wage have on the overall economy? What has been your experience working for wages? If you are a proponent for the minimum wage, how much do you think it should be? Which laborers should be covered by the minimum wage law?
4. Smith talks about masters and common laborers. Nowadays, we talk in terms of management and labor. The U.S. economy is different today than it was in 1776. How has the relationship between management and labor changed? Who has the upper hand today, management or labor? What affects the relationship of labor to management? For labor to have greater power, what needs to happen in the economy? What can a wage earner (laborer) do today to increase his or her value to management? If you expect to work when you graduate, or if you already work, what must you do to tip the balance of power in your favor?
5. In discussing the burgeoning economy of North America, Smith says, “The value of children is the greatest of all encouragements to marriage” ([para. 10](#)). What do you think the value of children is to a family in today’s economy? Is Smith’s statement still valid? Explain why or why not. Smith considers this value as monetary, mentioning one hundred pounds as the value of a child before he or she is old enough to leave the house. How have things changed? What economic circumstances might be “the greatest of all encouragements to marriage” nowadays? Is it still the “value” of children?

CONNECTIONS

1. Smith seems generally optimistic about the forces of capitalism and the future of labor. Analyze his essay with an eye toward the vision of the present offered by Barbara Ehrenreich (“[Is the Middle Class Doomed?](#)”) and her concern for minimum wage workers. Which of these writers is more concerned for the welfare of labor? Which values labor more? How would Smith respond to the data that Ehrenreich presents?
2. How does Robert B. Reich’s analysis of the “new economy” (“[Why the Rich Are Getting Richer and the Poor, Poorer](#)”) alter the basic wisdom of Smith’s views on the natural progress of an economy’s development from agriculture to manufacturing to foreign trade? What novelties in the new economy affect your understanding of Smith’s sense of the role of labor in a capitalist society?
3. Adam Smith was the staunchest defender of capitalism of his time. Almost a hundred years later, Karl Marx (“[The Communist Manifesto](#)”) became the primary antagonist against capitalism and drew up plans for a communist economic system. What are Marx’s views on the condition and value of labor? How do they oppose Smith’s? With whom do you most sympathize? How valid do their theories seem to you today? What changes did Marx observe that Smith did not anticipate? Is Marx or Smith more concerned about the welfare of laborers?



Karl Marx *The Communist Manifesto*

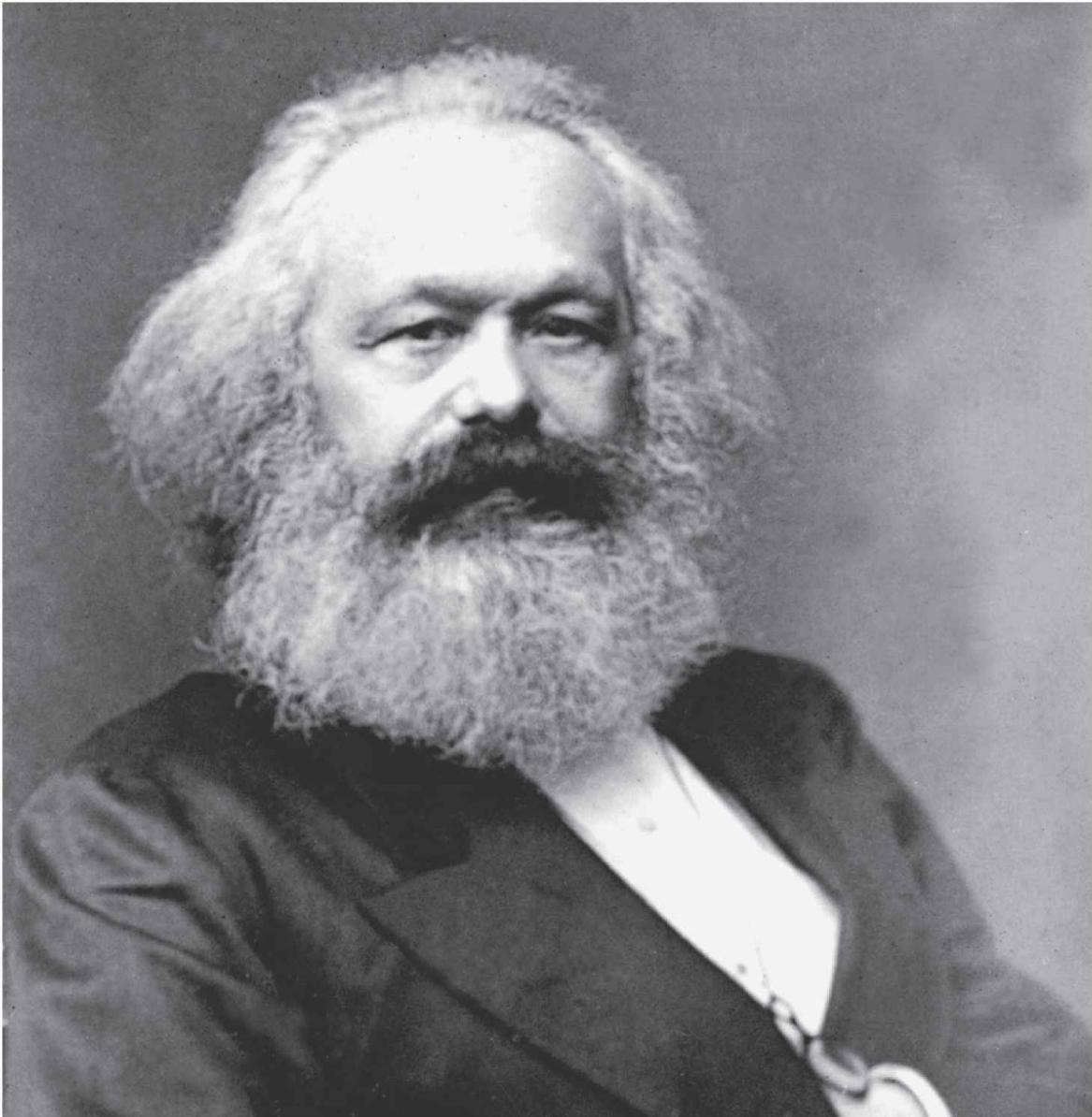


Photo 12/Alamy Stock Photo

KARL MARX (1818–1883) was born in Germany to Jewish parents who converted to Lutheranism. A scholarly man, Marx studied literature and philosophy, ultimately earning a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Jena. After being denied a university position, however, he turned to journalism to earn a living.

Soon after beginning his journalistic career, Marx came into conflict with Prussian authorities because of his radical social views, and after a period of exile in Paris he moved to Brussels. After several more moves, Marx found his way to London, where he finally settled in absolute poverty; his friend Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) contributed money to prevent Marx and his family from starving. During this time in London, Marx wrote the books for which he is famous while also writing for and editing newspapers. His contributions to the *New York Daily Tribune* number over three hundred items between the years 1851 and 1862.

Marx is best known for his theories of socialism, as expressed in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) — which, like much of his important work, was written with Engels's help — and in the three-volume *Das Kapital* (*Capital*), the first volume of which was published in 1867. In his own lifetime, he was not well known, nor were his ideas widely debated. Yet he was part of an ongoing movement composed mainly of intellectuals. Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924) was a disciple whose triumph in the Russian Revolution of 1917 catapulted Marx to the forefront of world thought. Since 1917, Marx's thinking has been scrupulously analyzed, debated, and argued. Capitalist thinkers have found him unconvincing, whereas communist thinkers have found him a prophet and keen analyst of social structures.

In England, Marx's studies centered on the concept of an ongoing class struggle between those who owned property — the bourgeoisie — and those who owned nothing but whose work

produced wealth — the proletariat. Marx was concerned with the forces of history, and his view of history was that it is progressive and, to an extent, inevitable. This view is prominent in *The Communist Manifesto*, particularly in Marx's review of the overthrow of feudal forms of government by the bourgeoisie. He thought it inevitable that the bourgeoisie and the proletariat would engage in a class struggle, from which the proletariat would emerge victorious. In essence, Marx took a materialist position. He denied the providence of God in the affairs of humans and defended the view that economic institutions evolve naturally and that, in their evolution, they control the social order. Thus, communism was an inevitable part of the process, and in the *Manifesto* he worked to clarify the reasons for its inevitability.

One of Marx's primary contentions was that capital is "not a personal, it is a social power" ([para. 78](#)). Thus, according to Marx, the "past dominates the present" ([para. 83](#)) because the accumulation of past capital determines how people will live in the present society. Capitalist economists, however, see capital as a personal power, but a power that, as John Kenneth Galbraith might say, should be used in a socially responsible way.

MARX'S RHETORIC

The selection included here omits one section, the least important for the modern reader. The first section has a relatively simple rhetorical structure that depends on comparison. The title, "Bourgeois and Proletarians," tells us that the section will clarify the nature of each class and then go on to make some

comparisons and contrasts. These concepts were by no means as widely discussed or thought about in 1848 as they are today, so Marx is careful to define his terms. At the same time, he establishes his theories regarding history by making further comparisons with class struggles in earlier ages.

Marx's style is simple and direct. He moves steadily from point to point, establishing his views on the nature of classes, on the nature of bourgeois society, and on the questions of industrialism and its effects on modern society. He considers wealth, worth, nationality, production, agriculture, and machinery. Each point is addressed in turn, usually in its own paragraph.

The organization of the next section, "Proletarians and Communists" ([paras. 60–133](#)), is not, despite its title, comparative in nature. Rather, with the proletariat defined as the class of the future, Marx tries to show that the communist cause is the proletarian cause. In the process, Marx uses a clever rhetorical strategy. He assumes that he is addressed by an antagonist — presumably a bourgeois or a proletarian who is in sympathy with the bourgeoisie. He then proceeds to answer each popular complaint against communism. He shows that it is not a party separate from other workers' parties ([para. 61](#)). He clarifies the question of abolishing existing property relations ([paras. 68–93](#)). He emphasizes the antagonism between capital and wage labor ([para. 76](#)); he discusses the disappearance of culture ([para. 94](#)); he clarifies the questions of the family ([paras. 98–100](#)) and of the exploitation of children ([para. 101](#)). He brings up the new system of public education ([paras. 102–104](#)). He raises the touchy issue

of the “community of women” ([paras. 105–110](#)), as well as the charge that communists want to abolish nations ([paras. 111–15](#)). He brushes aside religion ([para. 116](#)). When he is done with the complaints, he gives us a rhetorical signal: “But let us have done with the bourgeois objections to Communism” ([para. 126](#)).

The rest of the second section contains a brief summary, and then Marx presents his ten-point program ([para. 131](#)). The structure is simple, direct, and effective. In the process of answering the charges against communism, Marx is able to clarify exactly what it is and what it promises. In contrast to his earlier arguments, the ten points of his communist program seem clear, easy, and (again by contrast) almost acceptable. Although the style is not dashing (despite a few memorable lines), the rhetorical structure is extraordinarily effective for the purposes at hand.

In the last section ([paras. 135–145](#)), in which Marx compares the communists with other reform groups such as those agitating for redistribution of land and other agrarian reforms, he indicates that the communists are everywhere fighting alongside existing groups for the rights of people who are oppressed by their societies. As Marx says, “In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things” ([para. 141](#)). Nothing could be a more plain and direct declaration of sympathies.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Karl Marx’s *The Communist Manifesto*. Keeping them

in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What is the economic condition of the bourgeoisie? What is the economic condition of the proletariat?
2. How does the expanding world market for goods affect national identity?
3. What benefits does Marx expect communism to provide the proletariat?

Translated by Samuel Moore. Part III of The *Communist Manifesto*, “Socialist and Communist Literature,” is omitted here.

The Communist Manifesto

A specter is haunting Europe — the specter of Communism. All the Powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this specter; Pope and Czar, Metternich¹ and Guizot,² French Radicals³ and German police-spies.

Where is the party in opposition that has not been decried as communistic by its opponents in power? Where is the opposition that has not hurled back the branding reproach of Communism against the more advanced opposition parties, as well as against its reactionary adversaries?

Two things result from this fact.

I. Communism is already acknowledged by all European Powers to be itself a Power.

II. It is high time that Communists should openly, in the face of the whole world, publish their views, their aims, their tendencies, and meet this nursery tale of the specter of Communism with a Manifesto of the party itself.

To this end, Communists of various nationalities have assembled in London and sketched the following Manifesto, to be published in the English, French, German, Italian, Flemish, and Danish languages.

Bourgeois and Proletarians⁴

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

In the earlier epochs of history we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations.

The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society, has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.

Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.

I

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature; it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.

From the serfs of the Middle Ages sprang the chartered burghers of the earliest towns. From these burgesses the first elements of the bourgeoisie were developed.

The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape,⁵ opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie. The East Indian and Chinese markets, the colonization of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development.

The feudal system of industry, under which industrial production was monopolized by closed guilds, now no longer sufficed for the growing wants of the new market. The manufacturing system took its place. The guild-masters were pushed on one side by the manufacturing middle-class: division of labor between the different corporate guilds vanished in the face of division of labor in each single workshop.

Meantime the markets kept ever growing, the demand ever rising. Even manufacture no longer sufficed. Thereupon, steam and machinery revolutionized industrial production. The place of manufacture was taken by the giant, Modern Industry, the place of the industrial middle-class, by industrial millionaires, the leaders of whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois.

Modern industry has established the world-market, for which the discovery of America paved the way. This market has given an immense development to commerce, to navigation, to communication by land. This development has, in its turn, reacted on the extension of industry; and in proportion as industry, commerce, navigation, railways extended, in the same proportion the bourgeoisie developed, increased its capital, and pushed into the background every class handed down from the Middle Ages.

We see, therefore, how the modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long course of development, of a series of revolutions in the modes of production and of exchange.

Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance of that class. An oppressed class under the sway of the feudal nobility, an armed and self-governing association in the medieval commune,⁶ here independent urban republic (as in Italy and Germany), there taxable "third estate"⁷ of the monarchy (as in France), afterwards, in the period of manufacture proper, serving either the semi-feudal or the absolute monarchy as a counterpoise against nobility, and, in fact, corner stone of the great monarchies in general, the

bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of Modern Industry and of the world-market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part.

The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his “natural superiors,” and has left no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment.” It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor,⁸ of chivalrous enthusiasm, of Philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom — Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.

The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage laborers.

The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation.

The bourgeoisie has disclosed how it came to pass that the brutal display of vigor in the Middle Ages, which reactionists so much admire, found its fitting complement in the most slothful indolence. It has been the first to show what man's activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former Exoduses of nations and crusades.

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into the air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.

I

[The bourgeoisie] compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In a word, it creates a world after its own image.

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual

nations become common property. National onesidedness and narrowmindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world-literature.

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In a word, it creates a world after its own image.

The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life. Just as it has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on civilized ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West.

The bourgeoisie keeps more and more doing away with the scattered state of the population, of the means of production, and of property. It has agglomerated population, centralized means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands. The

necessary consequence of this was political centralization. Independent, or but loosely connected provinces, with separate interests, laws, governments, and systems of taxation, became lumped together in one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class interest, one frontier, and one customs tariff.

The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of Nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground — what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labor?

We see then: the means of production and of exchange on whose foundation the bourgeoisie built itself up, were generated in feudal society. At a certain stage in the development of these means of production and of exchange, the conditions under which feudal society produced and exchanged, the feudal organization of agriculture and manufacturing industry, in one word, the feudal relations of property became no longer compatible with the already developed productive forces; they became so many fetters. They had to burst asunder; they were burst asunder.

Into their place stepped free competition, accompanied by a social and political constitution adapted to it, and by the economical and

political sway of the bourgeois class.

A similar movement is going on before our own eyes. Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. For many a decade past, the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and of its rule. It is enough to mention the commercial crises that by their periodical return put on its trial, each time more threateningly, the existence of the entire bourgeois society. In these crises a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created productive forces, are periodically destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity — the epidemic of overproduction. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation, had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed; and why? Because there is too much civilization, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce. The productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of the bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions by which they are fettered, and as soon as they overcome these fetters they bring disorder into the

whole of bourgeois society, endanger the existence of bourgeois property. The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them. And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented.

The weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself.

But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons — the modern working class — the proletarians.

In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e., capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed, a class of laborers who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labor increases capital. These laborers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market.

Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labor, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and,

consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage of the machine, and it is only the most simple, most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack that is required of him. Hence, the cost of production of a workman is restricted almost entirely to the means of subsistence that he requires for his maintenance, and for the propagation of his race. But the price of a commodity, and also of labor, is equal to its cost of production. In proportion, therefore, as the repulsiveness of the work increases the wage decreases. Nay more, in proportion as the use of machinery and division of labor increases, in the same proportion the burden of toil increases, whether by prolongation of the working hours, by increase of the work enacted in a given time, or by increased speed of the machinery, etc.

Modern industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of the industrial capitalist. Masses of laborers, crowded into factories, are organized like soldiers. As privates of the industrial army they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants. Not only are they the slaves of the bourgeois class and of the bourgeois state, they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the overlooker, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself. The more openly this despotism proclaims gain to be its end and aim, the more petty, the more hateful and the more embittering it is.

The less the skill and exertion or strength implied in manual labor, in other words, the more modern industry becomes developed, the more is the labor of men superseded by that of women.

Differences of age and sex have no longer any distinctive social validity for the working class. All are instruments of labor, more or less expensive to use, according to their age and sex.

No sooner is the exploitation of the laborer by the manufacturer, so far at an end, that he receives his wages in cash, than he is set upon by the other portions of the bourgeoisie, the landlord, the shopkeeper, the pawnbroker, etc.

The lower strata of the middle class — the small trades-people, shopkeepers and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen, and peasants — all these sink gradually into the proletariat, partly because their diminutive capital does not suffice for the scale on which Modern Industry is carried on, and is swamped in the competition with the large capitalists, partly because their specialized skill is rendered worthless by new methods of production. Thus the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population.

The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie. At first the contest is carried on by individual laborers, then by the workpeople of a factory, then by the operatives of one trade, in one locality, against the individual bourgeois who directly exploits them. They direct their attacks not against the bourgeois conditions of production, but against the instruments of production themselves; they destroy imported wares that compete with their labor, they smash to pieces machinery, they set factories ablaze, they seek to

restore by force the vanished status of the workman of the Middle Ages.

At this stage the laborers still form an incoherent mass scattered over the whole country, and broken up by their mutual competition. If anywhere they unite to form more compact bodies, this is not yet the consequence of their own active union, but of the union of the bourgeoisie, which class, in order to attain its own political ends, is compelled to set the whole proletariat in motion, and is moreover yet, for a time, able to do so. At this stage, therefore, the proletarians do not fight their enemies, but the enemies of their enemies, the remnants of absolute monarchy, the landowners, the non-industrial bourgeois, the petty bourgeoisie. Thus the whole historical movement is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie, every victory so obtained is a victory for the bourgeoisie.

But with the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows and it feels that strength more. The various interests and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalized, in proportion as machinery obliterates all distinctions of labor, and nearly everywhere reduces wages to the same low level. The growing competition among the bourgeois, and the resulting commercial crisis, make the wages of the workers even more fluctuating. The unceasing improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their livelihood more and more precarious; the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the

character of collisions between two classes. Thereupon the workers begin to form combinations (Trades' Unions)⁹ against the bourgeois; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there the contest breaks out into riots.

Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battle lies not in the immediate result but in the ever-expanding union of workers. This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry, and that places the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralize the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national struggle between classes. But every class struggle is a political struggle. And that union, to attain which the burghers of the Middle Ages with their miserable highways, required centuries, the modern proletarians, thanks to railways, achieve in a few years.

This organization of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier. It compels legislative recognition of particular interests of the workers by taking advantage of the divisions among the bourgeoisie itself. Thus the ten hours' bill in England¹⁰ was carried.

Altogether collisions between the classes of the old society further, in many ways, the course of development of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie finds itself involved in a constant battle. At first with the aristocracy; later on, with those portions of the bourgeoisie itself whose interests have become antagonistic to the progress of industry; at all times, with the bourgeoisie of foreign countries. In all these battles it sees itself compelled to appeal to the proletariat, to ask for its help, and thus, to drag it into the political arena. The bourgeoisie itself, therefore, supplies the proletariat with its own elements of political and general education; in other words, it furnishes the proletariat with weapons for fighting the bourgeoisie.

Further, as we have already seen, entire sections of the ruling classes are, by the advance of industry, precipitated into the proletariat, or are at least threatened in their conditions of existence. These also supply the proletariat with fresh elements of enlightenment and progress.

Finally, in times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class — in fact, within the whole range of an old society — assumes such a violent, glaring character that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands. Just as, therefore, at an earlier period, a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have

raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movements as a whole.

Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of Modern Industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product.

The lower middle class, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the bourgeoisie, to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class. They are therefore not revolutionary, but conservative. Nay, more; they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history. If by chance they are revolutionary, they are so only in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat; they thus defend not their present, but their future interests; they desert their own standpoint to place themselves at that of the proletariat.

The “dangerous class,” the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue.

In the conditions of the proletariat, those of the old society at large are already virtually swamped. The proletarian is without property; his relation to his wife and children has no longer anything in common with the bourgeois family relations; modern industrial labor, modern subjection to capital, the same in England as in

France, in America as in Germany, has stripped him of every trace of national character. Law, morality, religion, are to him so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interests.

All the preceding classes that got the upper hand sought to fortify their already acquired status by subjecting society at large to their conditions of appropriation. The proletarians cannot become masters of the productive forces of society, except by abolishing their own previous mode of appropriation, and thereby also every other previous mode of appropriation. They have nothing of their own to secure and to fortify; their mission is to destroy all previous securities for and insurances of individual property.

All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority. The proletariat, the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up without the whole superincumbent strata of official society being sprung into the air.

Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.

In depicting the most general phases of the development of the proletariat, we traced the more or less veiled civil war, raging within existing society, up to the point where that war breaks out

into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie, lays the foundations for the sway of the proletariat.

Hitherto every form of society has been based, as we have already seen, on the antagonism of oppressing and oppressed classes. But in order to oppress a class, certain conditions must be assured to it under which it can, at least, continue its slavish existence. The serf, in the period of serfdom, raised himself to membership in the commune, just as the petty bourgeois, under the yoke of feudal absolutism, managed to develop into a bourgeois. The modern laborer, on the contrary, instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth. And here it becomes evident that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an over-riding law. It is unfit to rule, because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him. Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie; in other words, its existence is no longer compatible with society.

The essential condition for the existence, and for the sway of the bourgeois class, is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage labor. Wage labor rests exclusively on competition between the laborers. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the laborers, due to competition, by their involuntary combination,

due to association. The development of Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.

Proletarians and Communists

In what relation do the Communists stand to the proletarians as a whole?

The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working class parties.

They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole.

They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement.

The Communists are distinguished from the other working class parties by this only: 1. In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality. 2. In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.

The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand practically the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.

The immediate aim of the Communists is the same as that of all the other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat.

The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented or discovered by this or that would-be universal reformer.

They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes. The abolition of existing property relations is not at all a distinctive feature of Communism.

All property relations in the past have continually been subject to historical change consequent upon the change in historical conditions.

The French Revolution, for example, abolished feudal property in favor of bourgeois property.

The distinguishing feature of Communism is not the abolition of property generally, but the abolition of bourgeois property. But modern bourgeois private property is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products, that is based on class antagonism, on the exploitation of the many by the few.

In this sense, the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: abolition of private property.

We Communists have been reproached with the desire of abolishing the right of personally acquiring property as the fruit of a man's own labor, which property is alleged to be the groundwork of all personal freedom, activity, and independence.

Hard won, self-acquired, self-earned property! Do you mean the property of the petty artisan and of the small peasant, a form of property that preceded the bourgeois form? There is no need to abolish that; the development of industry has to a great extent already destroyed it, and is still destroying it daily.

Or do you mean modern bourgeois private property?

Property, in its present form, is based on the antagonism of capital and wage labor.

But does wage labor create any property for the laborer? Not a bit. It creates capital, i.e., that kind of property which exploits wage labor, and which cannot increase except upon condition of getting a new supply of wage labor for fresh exploitation. Property, in its present form, is based on the antagonism of capital and wage labor. Let us examine both sides of this antagonism.

To be a capitalist is to have not only a purely personal, but a social status in production. Capital is a collective product, and only by the united action of many members, nay, in the last resort, only by the united action of all members of society, can it be set in motion.

Capital is therefore not a personal, it is a social power.

When, therefore, capital is converted into common property, into the property of all members of society, personal property is not thereby transformed into social property. It is only the social character of the property that is changed. It loses its class character.

Let us now take wage labor.

The average price of wage labor is the minimum wage, i.e., that quantum of the means of subsistence which is absolutely requisite to keep the laborer in bare existence as a laborer. What, therefore, the wage laborer appropriates by means of his labor, merely suffices to prolong and reproduce a bare existence. We by no means intend to abolish this personal appropriation of the products of labor, an appropriation that is made for the

maintenance and reproduction of human life, and that leaves no surplus wherewith to command the labor of others. All that we want to do away with is the miserable character of this appropriation, under which the laborer lives merely to increase capital and is allowed to live only insofar as the interests of the ruling class require it.

In bourgeois society, living labor is but a means to increase accumulated labor. In Communist society accumulated labor is but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of the laborer.

In bourgeois society, therefore, the past dominates the present; in Communist society the present dominates the past. In bourgeois society, capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality.

And the abolition of this state of things is called by the bourgeois abolition of individuality and freedom! And rightly so. The abolition of bourgeois individuality, bourgeois independence, and bourgeois freedom is undoubtedly aimed at.

By freedom is meant, under the present bourgeois conditions of production, free trade, free selling and buying.

But if selling and buying disappears, free selling and buying disappears also. This talk about free selling and buying, and all the other “brave words” of our bourgeoisie about freedom in general have a meaning, if any, only in contrast with restricted

selling and buying, with the fettered traders of the Middle Ages, but have no meaning when opposed to the Communistic abolition of buying and selling, of the bourgeois conditions of production, and of the bourgeoisie itself.

You are horrified at our intending to do away with private property. But in your existing society private property is already done away with for nine-tenths of the population; its existence for the few is solely due to its nonexistence in the hands of those nine-tenths. You reproach us, therefore, with intending to do away with a form of property, the necessary condition for whose existence is the nonexistence of any property for the immense majority of society.

In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so: that is just what we intend.

From the moment when labor can no longer be converted into capital, money, or rent, into a social power capable of being monopolized, i.e., from the moment when individual property can no longer be transformed into bourgeois property, into capital, from that moment, you say, individuality vanishes.

You must, therefore, confess that by “individual” you mean no other person than the bourgeois, than the middle-class owner of property. This person must, indeed, be swept out of the way and made impossible.

Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society: all that it does is to deprive him of the power

to subjugate the labor of others by means of such appropriation.

It has been objected that upon the abolition of private property all work will cease and universal laziness will overtake us.

According to this, bourgeois society ought long ago to have gone to the dogs through sheer idleness; for those of its members who work acquire nothing, and those who acquire anything do not work. The whole of this objection is but another expression of the tautology:¹¹ that there can no longer be any wage labor when there is no longer any capital.

All objections urged against the Communistic mode of producing and appropriating material products have, in the same way, been urged against the Communistic modes of producing and appropriating intellectual products. Just as, to the bourgeois, the disappearance of class property is the disappearance of production itself, so the disappearance of class culture is to him identical with the disappearance of all culture.

That culture, the loss of which he laments, is, for the enormous majority, a mere training to act as a machine.

But don't wrangle with us so long as you apply, to our intended abolition of bourgeois property, the standard of your bourgeois notions of freedom, culture, law, etc. Your very ideas are but the outgrowth of the conditions of your bourgeois production and bourgeois property, just as your jurisprudence is but the will of your class made into a law for all, a will whose essential character

and direction are determined by the economical conditions of existence of your class.

The selfish misconception that induces you to transform into eternal laws of nature and of reason the social forms springing from your present mode of production and form of property — historical relations that rise and disappear in the progress of production — this misconception you share with every ruling class that has preceded you. What you see clearly in the case of ancient property, what you admit in the case of feudal property, you are of course forbidden to admit in the case of your own bourgeois form of property.

Abolition of the family! Even the most radical flare up at this infamous proposal of the Communists.

On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution.

The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course when its complement vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital.

Do you charge us with wanting to stop the exploitation of children by their parents? To this crime we plead guilty.

But, you will say, we destroy the most hallowed of relations when we replace home education by social.

And your education! Is not that also social, and determined by the social conditions under which you educate; by the intervention, direct or indirect, of society by means of schools, etc.? The Communists have not invented the intervention of society in education; they do but seek to alter the character of that intervention, and to rescue education from the influence of the ruling class.

The bourgeois clap-trap about the family and education, about the hallowed correlation of parent and child, become all the more disgusting, the more, by the action of Modern Industry, all family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labor.

But you Communists would introduce community of women, screams the whole bourgeoisie chorus.

The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production. He hears that the instruments of production are to be exploited in common, and, naturally, can come to no other conclusion, than that the lot of being common to all will likewise fall to the women.

He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production.

For the rest, nothing is more ridiculous than the virtuous indignation of our bourgeois at the community of women which, they pretend, is to be openly and officially established by the Communists. The Communists have no need to introduce community of women, it has existed almost from time immemorial.

Our bourgeois, not content with having the wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take the greatest pleasure in seducing each others' wives.

The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they don't possess.

Bourgeois marriage is in reality a system of wives in common, and thus, at the most, what the Communists might possibly be reproached with, is that they desire to introduce, in substitution for a hypocritically concealed, an openly legalized community of women. For the rest, it is self-evident that the abolition of the present system of production must bring with it the abolition of the community of women springing from that system, i.e., of prostitution both public and private.

The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationalities.

The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they don't possess. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is, so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.

National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world-market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto.

The supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still faster. United action, of the leading civilized countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat.

In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end.

The charges against Communism made from a religious, a philosophical, and generally, from an ideological standpoint, are not deserving of serious examination.

Does it require deep intuition to comprehend that man's ideas, views, and conceptions, in one word, man's consciousness,

changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations, and in his social life?

What else does the history of ideas prove than that intellectual production changes in character in proportion as material production is changed? The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class.

When people speak of ideas that revolutionize society they do but express the fact that within the old society the elements of a new one have been created, and that the dissolution of the old ideas keeps even pace with the dissolution of the old conditions of existence.

When the ancient world was in its last throes the ancient religions were overcome by Christianity. When Christian ideas succumbed in the eighteenth century to rationalist ideas, feudal society fought its death battle with the then revolutionary bourgeoisie. The ideas of religious liberty and freedom of conscience merely gave expression to the sway of free competition within the domain of knowledge.

“Undoubtedly,” it will be said, “religious, moral, philosophical, and judicial ideas have been modified in the course of historical development. But religion, morality, philosophy, political science, and law, constantly survived this change.

“There are, besides, eternal truths such as Freedom, Justice, etc., that are common to all states of society. But Communism

abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis; it therefore acts in contradiction to all past historical experience.”

What does this accusation reduce itself to? The history of all past society has consisted in the development of class antagonisms, antagonisms that assumed different forms at different epochs.

But whatever form they may have taken, one fact is common to all past ages, viz., the exploitation of one part of society by the other. No wonder, then, that the social consciousness of past ages, despite all the multiplicity and variety it displays, moves within certain common forms, or general ideas, which cannot completely vanish except with the total disappearance of class antagonisms.

The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas.

But let us have done with the bourgeois objections to Communism.

We have seen above that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.

The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the

proletariat organized as a ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible.

Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which in the course of the movement outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionizing the mode of production.

These measures will of course be different in different countries.

Nevertheless in the most advanced countries the following will be pretty generally applicable:

1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
3. Abolition of all right of inheritance.
4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
5. Centralization of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly.
6. Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State.
7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State; the bringing into cultivation of waste lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.

8. Equal liability of all to labor. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.
9. Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country by a more equable distribution of the population over the country.
10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labor in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, etc., etc.

When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organize itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonism, and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.

In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all....

Position of the Communists in Relation to the Various Existing Opposition Parties

[The preceding section] has made clear the relations of the Communists to the existing working class parties, such as the Chartists in England and the Agrarian Reforms¹² in America.

The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present they also represent and take care of the future of that movement. In France the Communists ally themselves with the Social-Democrats¹³ against the conservative and radical bourgeoisie, reserving, however, the right to take up a critical position in regard to phrases and illusions traditionally handed down from the great Revolution.

In Switzerland they support the Radicals,¹⁴ without losing sight of the fact that this party consists of antagonistic elements, partly of Democratic Socialists, in the French sense, partly of radical bourgeois.

In Poland they support the party that insists on an agrarian revolution, as the prime condition for national emancipation, that party which fomented the insurrection of Cracow in 1846.¹⁵

In Germany they fight with the bourgeoisie whenever it acts in a revolutionary way, against the absolute monarchy, the feudal squirearchy, and the petty bourgeoisie.

But they never cease for a single instant to instill into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, in order that the German workers may straightway use, as so many weapons against the bourgeoisie, the social and political conditions that the bourgeoisie must necessarily introduce along with its supremacy, and in order that, after the fall of the reactionary classes in Germany, the fight against the bourgeoisie itself may immediately begin.

The Communists turn their attention chiefly to Germany, because that country is on the eve of a bourgeois revolution,¹⁶ that is bound to be carried out under more advanced conditions of European civilization, and with a more developed proletariat, than that of England was in the seventeenth and of France in the eighteenth century, and because the bourgeois revolution in Germany will be but the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution.

In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things.

In all these movements they bring to the front, as the leading question in each, the property question, no matter what its degree of development at the time.

Finally, they labor everywhere for the union and agreement of the democratic parties of all countries.

The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.

Working men of all countries, unite!

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. Begin by establishing your understanding of the terms *bourgeois* and *proletarian*. Does Marx make a clear distinction between the terms? Are such terms applicable to American society today? Which of these groups, if any, do you feel that you belong to?
2. Marx makes the concept of social class fundamental to his theories. Can “social class” be easily defined? Are social classes evident in our society? Are they engaged in a struggle of the sort Marx assumes to be inevitable?
3. What are Marx’s views about the value of work in the society he describes? What is his attitude toward wealth?
4. Marx says that every class struggle is a political struggle. Do you agree?
5. Examine the first part. Which class gets more paragraphs — the bourgeoisie or the proletariat? Why?
6. Is the modern proletariat a revolutionary class?
7. Is Marx’s analysis of history clear? Try to summarize his views on the progress of history.
8. Is capital a social force, or is it a personal force? Do you think of your savings (either now or in the future) as belonging to you alone or as in some way belonging to your society?

9. What, in Marx's view, is the responsibility of wealthy citizens?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Defend or attack Marx's statement: "The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" ([para. 18](#)). Is this generally true? Take three "affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" and test each one in turn.
2. Examine Marx's statements regarding women. Refer especially to [paragraphs 39, 98, 105, and 110](#). Does he imply that his views are in conflict with those of his general society? After you have a list of his statements, see if you can establish exactly what he is recommending. Do you approve of his recommendations?
3. Marx's program of ten points is listed in [paragraph 131](#). Using the technique that Marx himself uses — taking each point in its turn, clarifying the problems with the point, and finally deciding for or against the point — evaluate his program. Which points do you feel are most beneficial to society? Which are detrimental to society? What is your overall view of the general worth of the program? Do you think it would be possible to put such a program into effect?
4. All Marx's views are predicated on the present nature of property ownership and the changes that communism will institute. He claims, for example, that a rupture with property relations "involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas" ([para. 125](#)). And he discusses in depth his proposal for the rupture of property relations ([paras. 68–93](#)). Clarify traditional property relations — what can be owned and by whom — and then contrast with these the proposals Marx makes. Establish your own views as you go along. Include your reasons for taking issue or expressing agreement with Marx. What kinds of property relations do you see around you? What kinds are most desirable for a healthy society?
5. What is the responsibility of the state toward the individual in the kind of economic circumstances that Marx describes? How can the independence of individuals who have amassed great wealth and

wish to operate freely be balanced against the independence of those who are poor and have no wealth to manipulate? What kinds of abuse are possible in such circumstances, and what remedies can a state achieve through altering the economic system? What specific remedies does Marx suggest? Are they workable?

6. Do you feel that Marx's suggestions are desirable? Or that they are likely to produce the effects he desires? Critics sometimes complain about Marx's misunderstanding of human nature. Do you feel he has an adequate understanding of human nature? What do you see as impediments to the full success of his program?
7. How accurate is Marx's view of the bourgeoisie? He identifies the bourgeoisie with capital and capitalists. He also complains that the bourgeoisie has established a world market for goods and by doing so has destroyed national and regional identities. Examine his analysis in [paragraphs 22–36](#) in terms of what you see happening in the economic world today and decide whether or not his ideas about how the bourgeoisie functions still apply and ring true. Did Marx foresee the problems of globalization that incited protests and riots such as those aimed at the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Fund during the last years of the twentieth century and the early part of the twenty-first century?

CONNECTIONS

1. Marx's philosophy differs from that of Robert B. Reich. How would Marx respond to Reich's analysis ("[Why the Rich Are Getting Richer and the Poor, Poorer](#)") of the future of labor in the next few decades? Would Marx see signs of a coming class struggle in the distinctions Reich draws between the routine workers, the in-person servers, and the symbolic analysts? Does Reich's essay take any of Marx's theories into account?
2. For Marx, there is no more antagonistic figure of capitalism than Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie himself condemns communism as a failed system, while Marx condemns capitalism as a system designed

to keep the rich rich and the poor poor. Imagine that Marx read Carnegie's *The Gospel of Wealth* ([Carnegie's The Gospel of Wealth](#)) and decided to counter it with an argument written as a letter to the editor of a major newspaper. What would be the basis of his attack, and how might he structure his letter? Consider Marx's own techniques in defending communism against the bourgeoisie ([paras. 60](#) onward) as you go about constructing the argument against Carnegie.

3. The principles of communism are totally unacceptable to economists such as F. A. Hayek ("[Economic Control and Totalitarianism](#)"). But it is also true that there may be points of agreement in other selections presented in this section. What concerns does each selection in this section take into consideration in establishing economic ideas that are designed to improve the lives of people? Which selection seems to be the most concerned about the ultimate happiness of the citizens of the state?



Andrew Carnegie *The Gospel of Wealth*



ullstein bild Dtl./Getty Images

ANDREW CARNEGIE (1835–1919) epitomizes the self-made man. Born in Scotland, he immigrated with his family to Allegheny, Pennsylvania, when he was thirteen. He went right to work in a cotton mill where he labored twelve hours a day, six days a week, for \$1.20. Three years later, he became a messenger boy for

\$2.20 a week for the local telegraph company in Pittsburgh. His connection with the telegraph company and his self-taught mastery of telegraphy proved fortuitous. This was a cutting-edge technology at the time, and it intersected another cutting-edge industry next to which the telegraph wires were strung, the railroads. In 1853, Thomas A. Scott, the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, employed him as his assistant for \$35 per month. His rise through the company was rapid after that.

Through the help of Scott, Carnegie invested money successfully and then reinvested his profits in sleeping cars for the railroad. That led to his buying out part of the company that made the cars. Because his investments were so successful, he was able to move into the iron and iron products industry, manufacturing components for bridges and railroad tracks. By the time the Civil War began, Carnegie had amassed a considerable amount of capital, the key to his later success. During the war, Scott appointed Carnegie superintendent of military transport and the Union telegraph lines, which had to be kept up to speed for communication between Washington and the field commanders.

Late in the war, Carnegie invested \$40,000 in property in Pennsylvania that yielded petroleum, and profits from that venture led him to move into the steel business in response to the need for cannon, shells, armor, and other military products. Because he had put some of his investment money into iron companies before the war, he was positioned to make considerable profits. After the end of the war, Carnegie saw an opportunity to expand his business by replacing older wooden railroad bridges with steel

and iron bridges, further building his fortune. It was then, in the 1870s, that he began to conceive of what was to become in 1892 the Carnegie Steel Company, one of the largest companies in the nation. Before that, however, he had purchased huge fields of iron ore around Lake Superior, so he was positioned as a supplier as well as a manufacturer of steel and iron.

Carnegie was a published author and expressed interest in improving his education and in meeting important literary and philosophical people such as Matthew Arnold (1822–1888), whom he admired, and Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), who became a very important influence on his thinking. Spencer was a utilitarian philosopher who was known as a social Darwinist. Spencer coined the phrase “the survival of the fittest” and applied it to the social sphere. Carnegie found Spencer’s views totally congenial since he felt that there were superior people (he said “men”) who were indeed the fittest in any economy and who deserved to profit from a laissez-faire economy and to rise in society. He was one of those men.

Carnegie was a serious reader and a lover of music. Late in life, he built and named Carnegie Hall in New York, which he designed specifically for concerts. Moreover, part of his success was due to his personal charm and grace, qualities that permitted him to travel in the highest social circles of his day. He also expressed a strong concern in helping working people educate themselves and enjoy the pleasures of art and music. Even in his thirties, he began to conceive his ultimate plan of giving away his fortune and

had already begun giving some of his money away to public programs.

His operations in the steel industry, however, were not as obviously benevolent as his programs to benefit the public. He ruthlessly cut wages for skilled and unskilled workers because he thought that the greater his profits, the more money he would have to give away and that he could do more good with that money than his workers could. He conceived of his purpose as being to serve the greatest good for the greatest number, but also believed that he could determine that need better than others, including his workers. In 1892, his workers held a strike at Homestead Steel that lasted 143 days. Carnegie was in Scotland most of this time, and his next in command, Henry Clay Frick, ordered Pinkerton guards to drive out the workers, who were then replaced with immigrants. There was violence, and ten men were killed. After that incident, Carnegie's reputation was never the same.

He sold his holdings in 1901 to the banker J. P. Morgan for \$480 million, which in today's money would be about \$10.6 billion. Morgan told Carnegie that he was probably the richest man in the world, which may have been true. The only other man at that time who could claim that title was John D. Rockefeller. Carnegie retired at sixty-six and began giving his money away in earnest, a sum ultimately amounting to \$350 million. He founded Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, gave considerable sums to Scottish universities and to his hometown in Scotland, and established pension funds for his workers at Homestead and at

universities. In small towns and cities throughout the United States and Canada, he is remembered for having built free public libraries, very few of which existed before he began his program. He built 2,509 libraries in all before he ended his project in 1917. Carnegie was not a religious man, preferring to think of himself as more influenced by science and learning, but he did commission a large number of pipe organs to be installed in churches, ostensibly because he approved of the music they would play.

Interestingly, Carnegie challenged the great holders of fortunes in his day to give their money away while they were still living, as he was planning to do. However, other than John D. Rockefeller, few of them followed his lead. Many established philanthropies after their deaths, but they did not have the pleasure of seeing their wealth perform public service.

CARNEGIE'S RHETORIC

One of the first rhetorical notes is the use of the word *Gospel* in the title. Originally the essay was titled "Wealth," but when it was quickly reprinted to be distributed more widely, *Gospel* was added. The effect is to impart an almost divine authority to the text because it echoes the gospels of the New Testament and seems to connect to the teachings of Jesus. Originally, *gospel* meant "good news," and Carnegie certainly thought his concepts here were the best news he could provide.

The organization of the essay is clear enough. Carnegie begins by posing a problem: "The problem of our age is the proper

administration of wealth.” This profound declaration focuses our attention, but in 1889 we might have felt that it was not the only, nor the most important, problem of the age. Being hyperbolic in that fashion simply forces us to put aside other considerations and attend to the problem of the “contrast between the palace of the millionaire and the cottage of the laborer” ([para. 1](#)). We might expect Carnegie to be critical of this unequal distinction, but instead he says that this is the natural result of civilization. By contrast, the home of the leader of the Sioux is much the same as the most ordinary tribe member, and thus Carnegie tacitly implies that the Sioux are not civilized. Hidden in his discussion is the assumption that there is a form of Darwinian evolution at work that has produced a “progress of the race,” a theme he touches on constantly, and that the modern industrial leader, such as Carnegie himself, is an example of the “fittest” in society.

Carnegie’s Darwinism derives from the teaching of Herbert Spencer and was enthusiastically adopted by other leaders who amassed astonishing fortunes in the years during and after the Civil War. It surfaces in specific rhetorical flourishes that center on the idea of laws of nature that are inevitable and, for Carnegie, desirable. In [paragraph 5](#), Carnegie introduces the “law of competition” and sees it as one of the most beneficial laws because it concentrates wealth into the hands of the few. The few then create capital, and capital is what makes civilization the beautiful thing it is in his eyes. In [paragraph 7](#), Carnegie talks about “the Law of Accumulation of Wealth, and the Law of Competition” and admits that, although the laws may be imperfect in some ways, “they are, nevertheless, like the highest type of

man, the best and most valuable of all that humanity has yet accomplished.” In the next paragraph, he refers to these as “the laws upon which civilization is founded,” leaving the reader no other option than to accept his view.

Another crucial issue that Carnegie treats and develops throughout the essay is his concept of individualism. He contrasts the individualism of capitalism with the collectivism of communism, a movement that had been discussed throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Individualism produced the wealth of the nation, according to Carnegie. It was responsible for the achievements of men like him. He treats it as a sacred principle in itself, although he does not declare it a law, as he does the laws of accumulation and distribution.

After praising the system that has produced so much wealth, he then condemns those who would make a religion of wealth. His main point is that fortunes such as his are only in trust, to be disbursed for the public good. Of course, he is the person to decide what the public should have: parks, works of art, public institutions, and other benefits “in the forms best calculated to do them lasting good” ([para. 23](#)). The community gets the benefit, but the philanthropist administers “it for the community far better than it could or would have done for itself ” ([para. 24](#)).

Carnegie praises wealth but condemns charity. He cites an example of a wealthy man who gave a handout to a stranger on the street and claims that what that man did was “probably one of the most selfish and very worst actions of his life” ([para. 21](#)).

“Indiscriminate charity” is to be condemned because “[o]f every thousand dollars spent in so-called charity to-day, it is probable that \$950 is unwisely spent.” Charity only goes to those who can help themselves, and as he says, those who can help themselves rarely need assistance. Charity, he fears, only encourages “the slothful, the drunken, the unworthy.”

Among the remarkable experiences Carnegie had in his philanthropic years was his singular effort to help support the Tuskegee Institute, a traditionally African American college in Alabama associated with its founder, Booker T. Washington (1856–1915). Carnegie and Washington worked together on a number of projects, among them the founding of the National Negro Business League. Carnegie was a major contributor to the early development of Tuskegee and an enthusiastic friend of Washington, whose views regarding self-improvement much resembled his own.

Carnegie died in Lenox, Massachusetts, in 1919, and the bulk of his remaining wealth went to the Carnegie Corporation and continued his program of public funding.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Andrew Carnegie’s *The Gospel of Wealth*. Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What does Carnegie see as the problem of “our age”?

2. Why does Carnegie accept the great gap between the wealth of the millionaire and the relative poverty of the laborer?
3. What laws does Carnegie feel are at work in society to help produce great wealth?
4. What is the highest obligation of the person who has amassed a great fortune?

Originally published as "Wealth" in the North American Review, June 1889.

The Gospel of Wealth

The problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth, so that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship. The conditions of human life have not only been changed, but revolutionized, within the past few hundred years. In former days there was little difference between the dwelling, dress, food, and environment of the chief and those of his retainers. The Indians are to-day where civilized man then was. When visiting the Sioux, I was led to the wigwam of the chief. It was just like the others in external appearance, and, even within, the difference was trifling between it and those of the poorest of his braves. The contrast between the palace of the millionaire and the cottage of the laborer with us to-day measures the change which has come with civilization.

This change, however, is not to be deplored, but welcomed as highly beneficial. It is well, nay, essential for the progress of the race, that the houses of some should be homes for all that is highest and best in literature and the arts, and for all the refinements of civilization, rather than that none should be so. Much better this great irregularity than universal squalor. Without wealth there can be no Maecenas.¹ The “good old times” were not good old times. Neither master nor servant was as well situated then as to-day. A relapse to old conditions would be disastrous to both — not the least so to him who serves — and would sweep away civilization with it. But whether the change be for good or ill, it is upon us, beyond our power to alter, and therefore to be

accepted and made the best of. It is a waste of time to criticize the inevitable.

It is easy to see how the change has come. One illustration will serve for almost every phase of the cause. In the manufacture of products we have the whole story. It applies to all combinations of human industry, as stimulated and enlarged by the inventions of this scientific age. Formerly articles were manufactured at the domestic hearth or in small shops which formed part of the household. The master and his apprentices worked side by side, the latter living with the master, and therefore subject to the same conditions. When these apprentices rose to be masters, there was little or no change in their mode of life, and they, in turn, educated in the same routine succeeding apprentices. There was, substantially, social equality, and even political equality, for those engaged in industrial pursuits had then little or no political voice in the State.

The poor enjoy what the rich could not before afford. What were the luxuries have become the necessaries of life.

But the inevitable result of such a mode of manufacture was crude articles at high prices. To-day the world obtains commodities of excellent quality at prices which even the generation preceding this would have deemed incredible. In the commercial world

similar causes have produced similar results, and the race is benefited thereby. The poor enjoy what the rich could not before afford. What were the luxuries have become the necessities of life. The laborer has now more comforts than the farmer had a few generations ago. The farmer has more luxuries than the landlord had, and is more richly clad and better housed. The landlord has books and pictures rarer, and appointments more artistic, than the King could then obtain.

The price we pay for this salutary change is, no doubt, great. We assemble thousands of operatives in the factory, in the mine, and in the counting-house, of whom the employer can know little or nothing, and to whom the employer is little better than a myth. All intercourse between them is at an end. Rigid Castes are formed, and, as usual, mutual ignorance breeds mutual distrust. Each Caste is without sympathy for the other, and ready to credit anything disparaging in regard to it. Under the law of competition, the employer of thousands is forced into the strictest economies, among which the rates paid to labor figure prominently, and often there is friction between the employer and the employed, between capital and labor, between rich and poor. Human society loses homogeneity.

The price which society pays for the law of competition, like the price it pays for cheap comforts and luxuries, is also great; but the advantages of this law are also greater still, for it is to this law that we owe our wonderful material development, which brings improved conditions in its train. But, whether the law be benign or not, we must say of it, as we say of the change in the conditions of

men to which we have referred: it is here; we cannot evade it; no substitutes for it have been found; and while the law may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest in every department. We accept and welcome, therefore, as conditions to which we must accommodate ourselves, great inequality of environment, the concentration of business, industrial and commercial, in the hands of a few, and the law of competition between these, as being not only beneficial, but essential for the future progress of the race. Having accepted these, it follows that there must be great scope for the exercise of special ability in the merchant and in the manufacturer who has to conduct affairs upon a great scale. That this talent for organization and management is rare among men is proved by the fact that it invariably secures for its possessor enormous rewards, no matter where or under what laws or conditions. The experienced in affairs always rate the MAN whose services can be obtained as a partner as not only the first consideration, but such as to render the question of his capital scarcely worth considering, for such men soon create capital; while, without the special talent required, capital soon takes wings. Such men become interested in firms or corporations using millions; and estimating only simple interest to be made upon the capital invested, it is inevitable that their income must exceed their expenditures, and that they must accumulate wealth. Nor is there any middle ground which such men can occupy, because the great manufacturing or commercial concern which does not earn at least interest upon its capital soon becomes bankrupt. It must either go forward or fall behind: to stand still is impossible. It is a condition essential for its successful operation that it should be

thus far profitable, and even that, in addition to interest on capital, it should make profit. It is a law that men possessed of this peculiar talent for affairs, under the free play of economic forces, must of necessity soon be in receipt of more revenue than can be judiciously expended upon themselves; and this law is as beneficial for the race as the others.

Individualism, Private Property, the Law of Accumulation of Wealth, and the Law of Competition ... these are the highest results of human experience, the soil in which society has so far produced the best fruit.

Objections to the foundations upon which society is based are not in order, because the condition of the race is better with these than it has been with any others which have been tried. Of the effect of any new substitutes proposed we cannot be sure. The Socialist or Anarchist who seeks to overturn present conditions is to be regarded as attacking the foundation upon which civilization itself rests, for civilization took its start from the day that the capable, industrious workman said to his incompetent and lazy fellow, "If thou dost not sow, thou shalt not reap," and thus ended primitive Communism by separating the drones from the bees. One who studies this subject will soon be brought face to face with the conclusion that upon the sacredness of property civilization itself depends — the right of the laborer to his hundred

dollars in the savings-bank, and equally the legal right of the millionaire to his millions. To those who propose to substitute Communism for this intense Individualism the answer, therefore, is: the race has tried that. All progress from that barbarous day to the present time has resulted from its displacement. Not evil, but good, has come to the race from the accumulation of wealth by those who have the ability and energy that produce it. But even if we admit for a moment that it might be better for the race to discard its present foundation, Individualism — that it is a nobler ideal that man should labor, not for himself alone, but in and for a brotherhood of his fellows, and share with them all in common, realizing Swedenborg's² idea of Heaven, where, as he says, the angels derive their happiness, not from laboring for self, but for each other — even admit all this, and a sufficient answer is, This is not evolution, but revolution. It necessitates the changing of human nature itself — a work of aeons, even if it were good to change it, which we cannot know. It is not practicable in our day or in our age. Even if desirable theoretically, it belongs to another and long-succeeding sociological stratum. Our duty is with what is practicable now; with the next step possible in our day and generation. It is criminal to waste our energies in endeavoring to uproot, when all we can profitably or possibly accomplish is to bend the universal tree of humanity a little in the direction most favorable to the production of good fruit under existing circumstances. We might as well urge the destruction of the highest existing type of man because he failed to reach our ideal as to favor the destruction of Individualism, Private Property, the Law of Accumulation of Wealth, and the Law of Competition; for these are the highest results of human experience, the soil in

which society so far has produced the best fruit. Unequally or unjustly, perhaps, as these laws sometimes operate, and imperfect as they appear to the Idealist, they are, nevertheless, like the highest type of man, the best and most valuable of all that humanity has yet accomplished.

We start, then, with a condition of affairs under which the best interests of the race are promoted, but which inevitably gives wealth to the few. Thus far, accepting conditions as they exist, the situation can be surveyed and pronounced good. The question then arises — and, if the foregoing be correct, it is the only question with which we have to deal — What is the proper mode of administering wealth after the laws upon which civilization is founded have thrown it into the hands of the few? And it is of this great question that I believe I offer the true solution. It will be understood that *fortunes* are here spoken of, not moderate sums saved by many years of effort, the returns from which are required for the comfortable maintenance and education of families. This is not *wealth*, but only *competence*, which it should be the aim of all to acquire.

There are but three modes in which surplus wealth can be disposed of. It can be left to the families of the decedents; or it can be bequeathed for public purposes; or, finally, it can be administered during their lives by its possessors. Under the first and second modes most of the wealth of the world that has reached the few has hitherto been applied. Let us in turn consider each of these modes. The first is the most injudicious. In monarchical countries, the estates and the greatest portion of the

wealth are left to the first son, that the vanity of the parent may be gratified by the thought that his name and title are to descend to succeeding generations unimpaired. The condition of this class in Europe to-day teaches the futility of such hopes or ambitions. The successors have become impoverished through their follies or from the fall in the value of land. Even in Great Britain the strict law of entail³ has been found inadequate to maintain the status of an hereditary class. Its soil is rapidly passing into the hands of the stranger. Under republican institutions the division of property among the children is much fairer, but the question which forces itself upon thoughtful men in all lands is: Why should men leave great fortunes to their children? If this is done from affection, is it not misguided affection? Observation teaches that, generally speaking, it is not well for the children that they should be so burdened. Neither is it well for the state. Beyond providing for the wife and daughters moderate sources of income, and very moderate allowances indeed, if any, for the sons, men may well hesitate, for it is no longer questionable that great sums bequeathed oftener work more for the injury than for the good of the recipients. Wise men will soon conclude that, for the best interests of the members of their families and of the state, such bequests are an improper use of their means.

It is not suggested that men who have failed to educate their sons to earn a livelihood shall cast them adrift in poverty. If any man has seen fit to rear his sons with a view to their living idle lives, or, what is highly commendable, has instilled in them the sentiment that they are in a position to labor for public ends without reference to pecuniary considerations, then, of course, the duty of

the parent is to see that such are provided for *in moderation*. There are instances of millionaires' sons unspoiled by wealth, who, being rich, still perform great services in the community. Such are the very salt of the earth, as valuable as, unfortunately, they are rare; still it is not the exception, but the rule, that men must regard, and, looking at the usual result of enormous sums conferred upon legatees, the thoughtful man must shortly say, "I would as soon leave to my son a curse as the almighty dollar," and admit to himself that it is not the welfare of the children, but family pride, which inspires these enormous legacies.

As to the second mode, that of leaving wealth at death for public uses, it may be said that this is only a means for the disposal of wealth, provided a man is content to wait until he is dead before it becomes of much good in the world. Knowledge of the results of legacies bequeathed is not calculated to inspire the brightest hopes of much posthumous good being accomplished. The cases are not few in which the real object sought by the testator is not attained, nor are they few in which his real wishes are thwarted. In many cases the bequests are so used as to become only monuments of his folly. It is well to remember that it requires the exercise of not less ability than that which acquired the wealth to use it so as to be really beneficial to the community. Besides this, it may fairly be said that no man is to be extolled for doing what he cannot help doing, nor is he to be thanked by the community to which he only leaves wealth at death. Men who leave vast sums in this way may fairly be thought men who would not have left it at all had they been able to take it with them. The memories of such cannot be held in grateful remembrance, for there is no grace in

their gifts. It is not to be wondered at that such bequests seem so generally to lack the blessing.

The growing disposition to tax more and more heavily large estates left at death is a cheering indication of the growth of a salutary change in public opinion. The State of Pennsylvania now takes — subject to some exceptions — one-tenth of the property left by its citizens. The budget presented in the British Parliament the other day proposes to increase the death-duties; and, most significant of all, the new tax is to be a graduated one. Of all forms of taxation, this seems the wisest. Men who continue hoarding great sums all their lives, the proper use of which for public ends would work good to the community, should be made to feel that the community, in the form of the state, cannot thus be deprived of its proper share. By taxing estates heavily at death the state marks its condemnation of the selfish millionaire's unworthy life.

It is desirable that nations should go much further in this direction. Indeed, it is difficult to set bounds to the share of a rich man's estate which should go at his death to the public through the agency of the state, and by all means such taxes should be graduated, beginning at nothing upon moderate sums to dependents, and increasing rapidly as the amounts swell, until of the millionaire's hoard, as of Shylock's,⁴ at least

—The other half

Comes to the privy coffer of the state.

This policy would work powerfully to induce the rich man to attend to the administration of wealth during his life, which is the end that society should always have in view, as being that by far most fruitful for the people. Nor need it be feared that this policy would sap the root of enterprise and render men less anxious to accumulate, for to the class whose ambition it is to leave great fortunes and be talked about after their death, it will attract even more attention, and, indeed, be a somewhat nobler ambition to have enormous sums paid over to the state from their fortunes.

There remains, then, only one mode of using great fortunes; but in this we have the true antidote for the temporary unequal distribution of wealth, the reconciliation of the rich and the poor — a reign of harmony — another ideal, differing, indeed, from that of the Communist in requiring only the further evolution of existing conditions, not the total overthrow of our civilization. It is founded upon the present most intense individualism, and the race is prepared to put it in practice by degrees whenever it pleases. Under its sway we shall have an ideal state, in which the surplus wealth of the few will become, in the best sense, the property of the many, because administered for the common good, and this wealth, passing through the hands of the few, can be made a much more potent force for the elevation of our race than if it had been distributed in small sums to the people themselves. Even the poorest can be made to see this, and to agree that great sums gathered by some of their fellow-citizens and spent for public purposes, from which the masses reap the principal benefit, are more valuable to them than if scattered among them through the course of many years in trifling amounts.

If we consider what results flow from the Cooper Institute,⁵ for instance, to the best portion of the race in New York not possessed of means, and compare these with those which would have arisen for the good of the masses from an equal sum distributed by Mr. Cooper in his lifetime in the form of wages, which is the highest form of distribution, being for work done and not for charity, we can form some estimate of the possibilities for the improvement of the race which lie embedded in the present law of the accumulation of wealth. Much of this sum, if distributed in small quantities among the people, would have been wasted in the indulgence of appetite, some of it in excess, and it may be doubted whether even the part put to the best use, that of adding to the comforts of the home, would have yielded results for the race, as a race, at all comparable to those which are flowing and are to flow from the Cooper Institute from generation to generation. Let the advocate of violent or radical change ponder well this thought.

We might even go so far as to take another instance, that of Mr. Tilden's bequest of five millions of dollars for a free library in the city of New York, but in referring to this one cannot help saying involuntarily, How much better if Mr. Tilden⁶ had devoted the last years of his own life to the proper administration of this immense sum; in which case neither legal contest nor any other cause of delay could have interfered with his aims. But let us assume that Mr. Tilden's millions finally become the means of giving to New York a noble public library, where the treasures of the world contained in books will be open to all forever, without money and without price. Considering the good of that part of the race which

congregates in and around Manhattan Island, would its permanent benefit have been better promoted had these millions been allowed to circulate in small sums through the hands of the masses? Even the most strenuous advocate of Communism must entertain a doubt upon this subject. Most of those who think will probably entertain no doubt whatever.

Poor and restricted are our opportunities in this life; narrow our horizon; our best work most imperfect; but rich men should be thankful for one inestimable boon. They have it in their power during their lives to busy themselves in organizing benefactions from which the masses of their fellows will derive lasting advantage, and thus dignify their own lives. The highest life is probably to be reached, not by such imitation of the life of Christ as Count Tolstoi⁷ gives us, but, while animated by Christ's spirit, by recognizing the changed conditions of this age, and adopting modes of expressing this spirit suitable to the changed conditions under which we live; still laboring for the good of our fellows, which was the essence of his life and teaching, but laboring in a different manner.

This, then, is held to be the duty of the man of Wealth: first, to set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; to provide moderately for the legitimate wants of those dependent upon him; and after doing so to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds, which he is called upon to administer, and strictly bound as a matter of duty to administer in the manner which, in his judgment, is best calculated to produce the most beneficial results for the

community — the man of wealth thus becoming the mere agent and trustee for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer, doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves.

We are met here with the difficulty of determining what are moderate sums to leave to members of the family; what is modest, unostentatious living; what is the test of extravagance. There must be different standards for different conditions. The answer is that it is as impossible to name exact amounts or actions as it is to define good manners, good taste, or the rules of propriety; but, nevertheless, these are verities, well known although undefinable. Public sentiment is quick to know and to feel what offends these. So in the case of wealth. The rule in regard to good taste in the dress of men or women applies here. Whatever makes one conspicuous offends the canon. If any family be chiefly known for display, for extravagance in home, table, equipage, for enormous sums ostentatiously spent in any form upon itself — if these be its chief distinctions, we have no difficulty in estimating its nature or culture. So likewise in regard to the use or abuse of its surplus wealth, or to generous, free-handed cooperation in good public uses, or to unabated efforts to accumulate and hoard to the last, whether they administer or bequeath. The verdict rests with the best and most enlightened public sentiment. The community will surely judge, and its judgments will not often be wrong.

Those who would administer wisely must, indeed, be wise, for one of the serious obstacles to the improvement of our race is indiscriminate charity.

The best uses to which surplus wealth can be put have already been indicated. Those who would administer wisely must, indeed, be wise, for one of the serious obstacles to the improvement of our race is indiscriminate charity. It were better for mankind that the millions of the rich were thrown into the sea than so spent as to encourage the slothful, the drunken, the unworthy. Of every thousand dollars spent in so-called charity to-day, it is probable that \$950 is unwisely spent; so spent, indeed, as to produce the very evils which it proposes to mitigate or cure. A well-known writer of philosophic books admitted the other day that he had given a quarter of a dollar to a man who approached him as he was coming to visit the house of his friend. He knew nothing of the habits of this beggar; knew not the use that would be made of this money, although he had every reason to suspect that it would be spent improperly. This man professed to be a disciple of Herbert Spencer;⁸ yet the quarter-dollar given that night will probably work more injury than all the money which its thoughtless donor will ever be able to give in true charity will do good. He only gratified his own feelings, saved himself from annoyance — and this was probably one of the most selfish and very worst actions of his life, for in all respects he is most worthy.

In bestowing charity, the main consideration should be to help those who will help themselves; to provide part of the means by which those who desire to improve may do so; to give those who desire to rise the aids by which they may rise; to assist, but rarely or never to do all. Neither the individual nor the race is improved by alms-giving. Those worthy of assistance, except in rare cases, seldom require assistance. The really valuable men of the race never do, except in cases of accident or sudden change. Every one has, of course, cases of individuals brought to his own knowledge where temporary assistance can do genuine good, and these he will not overlook. But the amount which can be wisely given by the individual for individuals is necessarily limited by his lack of knowledge of the circumstances connected with each. He is the only true reformer who is as careful and as anxious not to aid the unworthy as he is to aid the worthy, and, perhaps, even more so, for in alms-giving more injury is probably done by rewarding vice than by relieving virtue.

The rich man is thus almost restricted to following the examples of Peter Cooper, Enoch Pratt of Baltimore, Mr. Pratt of Brooklyn, Senator Stanford,⁹ and others, who know that the best means of benefiting the community is to place within its reach the ladders upon which the aspiring can rise — parks, and means of recreation, by which men are helped in body and mind; works of art, certain to give pleasure and improve the public taste; and public institutions of various kinds, which will improve the general condition of the people — in this manner returning their surplus wealth to the mass of their fellows in the forms best calculated to do them lasting good.

Thus is the problem of Rich and Poor to be solved. The laws of accumulation will be left free; the laws of distribution free. Individualism will continue, but the millionaire will be but a trustee for the poor; intrusted for a season with a great part of the increased wealth of the community, but administering it for the community far better than it could or would have done for itself. The best minds will thus have reached a stage in the development of the race in which it is clearly seen that there is no mode of disposing of surplus wealth creditable to thoughtful and earnest men into whose hands it flows save by using it year by year for the general good. This day already dawns. But a little while, and although, without incurring the pity of their fellows, men may die sharers in great business enterprises from which their capital cannot be or has not been withdrawn, and is left chiefly at death for public uses, yet the man who dies leaving behind him millions of available wealth, which was his to administer during life, will pass away “unwept, unhonored, and unsung,” no matter to what uses he leaves the dross which he cannot take with him. Of such as these the public verdict will then be: “The man who dies thus rich dies disgraced.”

Such, in my opinion, is the true Gospel concerning Wealth, obedience to which is destined some day to solve the problem of the Rich and the Poor, and to bring “Peace on earth, among men Good-Will.”



QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What do you see as the problem of wealth in this age?

2. What were the conditions of production in the age prior to Carnegie's ([para. 3](#))?
3. What was wrong with the products of the age prior to Carnegie's?
4. What is the law of competition? Is it still at work today? Is it a law?
5. Is conformity an important issue for Carnegie? Is he for or against it?
6. How great are the inequalities of wealth in this country today?
7. Why does Carnegie take a hard line on charity? What is your view on charity today?
8. In [paragraph 7](#), Carnegie refers to the "highest existing type of man." Whom do you think he is referring to? Whom would you mean if you used that term?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Is it true that today the "poor enjoy what the rich could not before afford" ([para. 4](#))? What do the poor enjoy today that the rich could not have enjoyed in 1889? To what extent are the things and conditions the poor enjoy now the result of the laws of competition and accumulation that Carnegie says operate in our civilization and make such enjoyment possible? If you feel that Carnegie is right in his contention about the production of benefits for the poor, do you then feel yourself inclined to agree with Carnegie in general?
2. What would Carnegie say about the great inequalities of wealth in this country today? In his time, about 1 percent of the population controlled half the wealth. Today, it is about 3 percent. One person in the United States whose wealth could compare with Carnegie's is Bill Gates, and his fortune is about half of Carnegie's in today's dollars. Would Carnegie feel things are getting better or that conditions are so different that there is no comparison with his age? What would his advice be to those with great wealth today?

3. One of Carnegie's important ideas is that societies evolve in the manner that life on earth evolves. He uses the term "survival of the fittest" ([para. 6](#)) and lauds the economic system that permits competition to weed out the weak and reward the strong. Social Darwinism, which is the theory Carnegie talks about, was very popular in the late 1800s. Learn what you can about the idea and determine whether or not Carnegie is following the main line of social Darwinism or if he is changing the idea to suit himself. After you have done some research, answer this question: Is Carnegie right in what he proposes for the progress of civilization?
4. In [paragraphs 6](#) and [7](#), Carnegie explains what kind of person will rise to great wealth, enumerating that person's qualities and establishing that such persons are rare enough to be worthy of great reward. He also argues against any criticism of his point of view by talking about how communism would be detrimental to society. He says, "Not evil, but good, has come to the race from the accumulation of wealth by those who have the ability and energy that produce it" ([para. 7](#)). Examine his arguments in these paragraphs and decide whether or not he is correct and explain why.
5. Carnegie gave away most of his wealth to support projects he felt would benefit the community. He built over 2,500 libraries, endowed many parks, and gave money to universities and other foundations that he thought would "improve the race." Assuming that you had unlimited wealth to give away, what would your priorities be? Do you approve of Carnegie's priorities, or do you feel they are not appropriate for today's communities? What would you want your wealth to achieve in our world?

CONNECTIONS

1. By using the word *Gospel* in his title, Carnegie implies that he follows an ethical and moral pattern in his life and in his attitude toward society. With which of the authors in Part V, "Ethics," would Carnegie most sympathize? Which author(s) would question his recommendations regarding the use of wealth? Imagine one of these

writers writing to Carnegie about *The Gospel of Wealth*. What would that author praise and what would he or she condemn? Would that author be likely to regard Carnegie as a hero or as a misguided do-gooder? Is Carnegie really interested in questions of morality and ethical behavior?

2. F. A. Hayek (“[Economic Control and Totalitarianism](#)”) was not a wealthy man, but his theories can be considered as supporting the principles that Andrew Carnegie raises in *The Gospel of Wealth*. Which of their ideas seem to be most in agreement about how a nation’s economy should work? What are their views on money and wealth? What are their views on poverty and the question of equal distribution of a nation’s wealth? Both of these writers construct their argument in favor of similar principles. How effective are their arguments? How does your thinking change after having studied their positions?
3. Robin Wall Kimmerer also invokes the economic practices of indigenous American tribal communities in her essay “[The Gift of Strawberries](#).” How does she characterize the relationship between her ancestors’ tribal culture and goods and services? How does this differ from Carnegie’s conception of economic relationships? Carnegie invokes indigenous tribal practices in order to make the case for unequal distribution of wealth, arguing that without this inequality there would be no civilization. How might Kimmerer respond to this argument and to his characterization of civilization and its goals? Do you see any values that they might have in common?



F. A. Hayek *Economic Control and Totalitarianism*



Hulton Deutsch/Corbis Historical/Getty Images

F. A. HAYEK (1899–1992) was born in Vienna, Austria, and served in the artillery in World War I. His experience in the army and then in postwar Vienna, which suffered in an economic collapse, shaped much of his later life. He entered the University of Vienna at age nineteen and took a doctorate in law in 1921 and

a doctorate in politics in 1923. At the time, the University of Vienna was one of the best places to study economics. Hayek carried the theories of “The Austrian School” to the London School of Economics, where he gave a series of lectures on the theory of money. As a result of these successful appearances, he became visiting professor and, a year later, was awarded a professorial chair.

His lectures were published as *Prices and Production* (1931) and represented a criticism of some of the theories in John Maynard Keynes’s 1930 publication, *A Treatise on Money*. Hayek’s critical review of Keynes’s book resulted in a public dispute between him and Keynes, whose economic ideas were the most important in England and America in the years before the war. Keynes’s theories on money and public spending during economic downturns are favored by many economists to this day. Hayek’s contemporary influence is seen in the rejection of socialist policies by capitalist countries. Early in his career, Hayek favored a version of laissez-faire economics, by which he meant very low government regulation and a rejection of planned economies.

Even though they disputed vigorously, Hayek and Keynes became friends and worked together during the Great Depression to develop economic models that would benefit the recovery in England and elsewhere. Hayek’s desire to help the people who suffer most from severe depression carried over from his years in postwar Vienna. His training in law and politics bore fruit in his work in economics. Hayek’s most popular book, *The Road to Serfdom*, was published by the University of Chicago Press in

1944. His critique of the developments in Germany in the 1930s, when National Socialism (Nazism) developed into a totalitarian government, led him to condemn planned economies and socialist programs.

During World War II, Hayek offered his services to the British government to use his fluency in German to produce propaganda. He was refused and spent the war years teaching in London. Because he was an alien — even though he had become a British subject in 1938 — he could not serve in any military or intelligence capacity.

The University of Chicago Press also published Hayek's *The Pure Theory of Capital* in 1941 and *Individualism and Economic Order* in 1948. In 1950, Hayek left London to join the School of Social Thought at the University of Chicago, where he stayed until 1961, after which he retired to Freiburg, Germany. While at Chicago, he published a great deal on many subjects in philosophy, economics, and sociology. In 1974, he shared the Nobel Prize for Economics with Gunnar Myrdal, and today his ideas are still regarded as an essential articulation of a conservative view of economics. For Hayek, the most important point was his condemnation of the government's control of the means of production.

HAYEK'S RHETORIC

Even though he is dealing with a sophisticated subject matter, Hayek writes clearly and simply, with carefully planned

paragraphs. Because he wrote this essay in 1944 and in a language not his own, his style is somewhat old-fashioned, and his paragraphs are generally long. Throughout this chapter from *The Road to Serfdom*, he constructs an argument point by point, addressing what he feels are the consequences of a planned economy. The argument is quiet, carefully paced, and uses primarily one rhetorical strategy: development by analysis of circumstances. He addresses the question of a planned economy and then carefully considers the circumstances in which people would live in a society in which the question of choice is limited to the needs of the planners. In many cases, this means that the needs of the society will be those of the general public rather than of the individual.

Hayek implies that in a planned economy the individual would have to give up a number of freedoms for the benefit of being taken care of by the planners, who would estimate the individual's needs and accommodate them. He begins by considering that people might think that economic planning would “free us from less important cares” ([para. 2](#)), but then reminds us that economic issues cover an enormous range of personal concerns. He goes on to review them, and ultimately says, “economic planning would involve direction of almost the whole of our life” ([para. 8](#)).

The question of freedom of choice is a serious issue that Hayek explains is possible in a competitive society because there are usually many products or services available if one does not satisfy the individual. But in a monopoly, there is little choice, and a planned economy would eventually constitute a monopoly.

Interestingly, when discussing the freedom of choice, he includes the freedom to make decisions that might lead to failure. His point is that he prefers that whatever economic decisions there are to be made, he wants to make them himself. It is the individual that takes precedent for him, rather than the community.

Among Hayek's rhetorical skills is his ability to create statements that have the appearance and power of a maxim or proverb. The following are some examples:

- “The ultimate ends of the activities of reasonable beings are never economic” ([para. 3](#)).
- “It would be much truer to say that money is one of the greatest instruments of freedom ever invented by man” ([para. 3](#)).
- “It is often said that political freedom is meaningless without economic freedom” ([para. 24](#)).

In the process of his analysis, he establishes that central planning will decide what products are to be made available. The decisions will be made on what is an essentially utilitarian pattern, choosing what seems best for the largest number of people. The principle of utilitarianism is to provide the greatest good for the greatest number. But in a planned economy, the decisions about what the greatest good will be is in the hands of the planners. The products that will be available to purchase will reflect the decisions of the planners.

In addition, not only will the products be based on the decisions of the central planners, but so will the kinds of work that will be available. People's careers will need to be shaped by the needs of the planners. Therefore, some career choices that do not satisfy the needs of the planners will simply not be available. Choice of work, which Hayek is quick to say is extremely important to the individual, will be curtailed and curtailed sharply.

The objective from the point of view of the reader is to examine Hayek's position because he is carefully constructing an argument against central planning and in favor of a competitive capitalism. He argues against socialism, which he describes as a planned economy. His argument builds on several important issues: the question of choice; the nature and consequence of planning; the force of the monopoly; the choice of work; and the distribution of wealth. When he has explored all those issues, he comes back to the idea expressed in the opening sentence: "Most planners who have seriously considered the practical aspects of their task have little doubt that a directed economy must be run on more or less dictatorial lines" ([para. 1](#)). When this book was written in the early 1940s, dictatorships existed throughout Europe and provided more than enough evidence for Hayek to believe his argument was sound and a warning to all free nations.



PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of F. A. Hayek's "Economic Control and Totalitarianism." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What constitutes “socialism” for Hayek?
2. Why would central economic planning limit the freedom of the individual?
3. Why would socialism eventually lead to totalitarianism?

From *The Road to Serfdom*.

Economic Control and Totalitarianism

The control of the production of wealth is the control of human life itself.

—Hilaire Belloc

Most planners who have seriously considered the practical aspects of their task have little doubt that a directed economy must be run on more or less dictatorial lines. That the complex system of interrelated activities, if it is to be consciously directed at all, must be directed by a single staff of experts, and that ultimate responsibility and power must rest in the hands of a commander-in-chief whose actions must not be fettered by democratic procedure, is too obvious a consequence of underlying ideas of central planning not to command fairly general assent. The consolation our planners offer us is that this authoritarian direction will apply “only” to economic matters. One of the most prominent economic planners, Stuart Chase,¹ assures us, for instance, that in a planned society “political democracy can remain if it confines itself to all but economic matters.” Such assurances are usually accompanied by the suggestion that, by giving up freedom in what are, or ought to be, the less important aspects of our lives, we shall obtain greater freedom in the pursuit of higher values. On this ground people who abhor the idea of a political dictatorship often clamor for a dictator in the economic field.

The arguments used appeal to our best instincts and often attract the finest minds. If planning really did free us from the less

important cares and so made it easier to render our existence one of plain living and high thinking, who would wish to belittle such an ideal? If our economic activities really concerned only the inferior or even more sordid sides of life, of course we ought to endeavor by all means to find a way to relieve ourselves from the excessive care for material ends and, leaving them to be cared for by some piece of utilitarian machinery, set our minds free for the higher things of life.

If we strive for money, it is because it offers us the widest choice in enjoying the fruits of our efforts.... money is one of the greatest instruments of freedom ever invented by man.

Unfortunately, the assurance people derive from this belief that the power which is exercised over economic life is a power over matters of secondary importance only, and which makes them take lightly the threat to the freedom of our economic pursuits, is altogether unwarranted. It is largely a consequence of the erroneous belief that there are purely economic ends separate from the other ends of life. Yet, apart from the pathological case of the miser, there is no such thing. The ultimate ends of the activities of reasonable beings are never economic. Strictly speaking, there is no “economic motive” but only economic factors conditioning our striving for other ends. What in ordinary language

is misleadingly called the “economic motive” means merely the desire for general opportunity, the desire for power to achieve unspecified ends.² If we strive for money, it is because it offers us the widest choice in enjoying the fruits of our efforts. Because in modern society it is through the limitation of our money incomes that we are made to feel the restrictions which our relative poverty still imposes upon us, many have come to hate money as the symbol of these restrictions. But this is to mistake for the cause the medium through which a force makes itself felt. It would be much truer to say that money is one of the greatest instruments of freedom ever invented by man. It is money which in existing society opens an astounding range of choice to the poor man — a range greater than that which not many generations ago was open to the wealthy. We shall better understand the significance of this service of money if we consider what it would really mean if, as so many socialists characteristically propose, the “pecuniary motive” were largely displaced by “noneconomic incentives.” If all rewards, instead of being offered in money, were offered in the form of public distinctions or privileges, positions of power over other men, or better housing or better food, opportunities for travel or education, this would merely mean that the recipient would no longer be allowed to choose and that whoever fixed the reward determined not only its size but also the particular form in which it should be enjoyed.

Once we realize that there is no separate economic motive and that an economic gain or economic loss is merely a gain or a loss where it is still in our power to decide which of our needs or desires shall be affected, it is also easier to see the important

kernel of truth in the general belief that economic matters affect only the less important ends of life and to understand the contempt in which “merely” economic considerations are often held. In a sense this is quite justified in a market economy — but only in such a free economy. So long as we can freely dispose over our income and all our possessions, economic loss will always deprive us only of what we regard as the least important of the desires we were able to satisfy. A “merely” economic loss is thus one whose effect we can still make fall on our less important needs, while when we say that the value of something we have lost is much greater than its economic value, or that it cannot even be estimated in economic terms, this means that we must bear the loss where it falls. And similarly with an economic gain. Economic changes, in other words, usually affect only the fringe, the “margin,” of our needs. There are many things which are more important than anything which economic gains or losses are likely to affect, which for us stand high above the amenities and even above many of the necessities of life which are affected by the economic ups and downs. Compared with them, the “filthy lucre,” the question whether we are economically somewhat worse or better off, seems of little importance. This makes many people believe that anything which, like economic planning, affects only our economic interests cannot seriously interfere with the more basic values of life.

This, however, is an erroneous conclusion. Economic values are less important to us than many things precisely because in economic matters we are free to decide what to us is more, and what less, important. Or, as we might say, because in the present

society it is we who have to solve the economic problems of our lives. To be controlled in our economic pursuits means to be always controlled unless we declare our specific purpose. Or, since when we declare our specific purpose we shall also have to get it approved, we should really be controlled in everything.

The question raised by economic planning is, therefore, not merely whether we shall be able to satisfy what we regard as our more or less important needs in the way we prefer. It is whether it shall be we who decide what is more, and what is less, important for us, or whether this is to be decided by the planner. Economic planning would not affect merely those of our marginal needs that we have in mind when we speak contemptuously about the merely economic. It would, in effect, mean that we as individuals should no longer be allowed to decide what we regard as marginal.

The authority directing all economic activity would control not merely the part of our lives which is concerned with inferior things; it would control the allocation of the limited means for all our ends. And whoever controls all economic activity controls the means for all our ends and must therefore decide which are to be satisfied and which not. This is really the crux of the matter. Economic control is not merely control of a sector of human life which can be separated from the rest; it is the control of the means for all our ends. And whoever has sole control of the means must also determine which ends are to be served, which values are to be rated higher and which lower — in short, what men should believe and strive for. Central planning means that the economic problem

is to be solved by the community instead of by the individual; but this involves that it must also be the community, or rather its representatives, who must decide the relative importance of the different needs.

The so-called economic freedom which the planners promise us means precisely that we are to be relieved of the necessity of solving our own economic problems and that the bitter choices which this often involves are to be made for us. Since under modern conditions we are for almost everything dependent on means which our fellow-men provide, economic planning would involve direction of almost the whole of our life. There is hardly an aspect of it, from our primary needs to our relations with our family and friends, from the nature of our work to the use of our leisure, over which the planner would not exercise his “conscious control.”³ The power of the planner over our private lives would be no less complete if he chose not to exercise it by direct control of our consumption. Although a planned society would probably to some extent employ rationing and similar devices, the power of the planner over our private lives does not depend on this and would be hardly less effective if the consumer were nominally free to spend his income as he pleased. The source of this power over all consumption which in a planned society the authority would possess would be its control over production.

Our freedom of choice in a competitive society rests on the fact that, if one person refuses to satisfy our wishes, we can turn to another. But if we face a monopolist we are at his mercy. And an authority directing the whole economic system would be the most

powerful monopolist conceivable. While we need probably not be afraid that such an authority would exploit this power in the manner in which a private monopolist would do so, while its purpose would presumably not be the extortion of maximum financial gain, it would have complete power to decide what we are to be given and on what terms. It would not only decide what commodities and services were to be available and in what quantities; it would be able to direct their distribution between districts and groups and could, if it wished, discriminate between persons to any degree it liked. If we remember why planning is advocated by most people, can there be much doubt that this power would be used for the ends of which the authority approves and to prevent the pursuits of ends which it disapproves?

The power conferred by the control of production and prices is almost unlimited. In a competitive society the prices we have to pay for a thing, the rate at which we can get one thing for another, depend on the quantities of other things of which by taking one, we deprive the other members of society.

The power conferred by the control of production and prices is almost unlimited. In a competitive society the prices we have to

pay for a thing, the rate at which we can get one thing for another, depend on the quantities of other things of which by taking one, we deprive the other members of society. This price is not determined by the conscious will of anybody. And if one way of achieving our ends proves too expensive for us, we are free to try other ways. The obstacles in our path are not due to someone's disapproving of our ends but to the fact that the same means are also wanted elsewhere. In a directed economy, where the authority watches over the ends pursued, it is certain that it would use its powers to assist some ends and to prevent the realization of others. Not our own view, but somebody else's, of what we ought to like or dislike would determine what we should get. And since the authority would have the power to thwart any efforts to elude its guidance, it would control what we consume almost as effectively as if it directly told us how to spend our income.

Not only in our capacity as consumers, however, and not even mainly in that capacity, would the will of the authority shape and "guide" our daily lives. It would do so even more in our position as producers. These two aspects of our lives cannot be separated; and as for most of us the time we spend at our work is a large part of our whole lives, and as our job usually also determines the place where and the people among whom we live, some freedom in choosing our work is, probably, even more important for our happiness than freedom to spend our income during the hours of leisure.

No doubt it is true that even in the best of worlds this freedom will be very limited. Few people ever have an abundance of choice of

occupation. But what matters is that we have some choice, that we are not absolutely tied to a particular job which has been chosen for us, or which we may have chosen in the past, and that if one position becomes quite intolerable, or if we set our heart on another, there is almost always a way for the able, some sacrifice at the price of which he may achieve his goal. Nothing makes conditions more unbearable than the knowledge that no effort of ours can change them; and even if we should never have the strength of mind to make the necessary sacrifice, the knowledge that we could escape if we only strove hard enough makes many otherwise intolerable positions bearable.

This is not to say that in this respect all is for the best in our present world, or has been so in the most liberal past, and that there is not much that could be done to improve the opportunities of choice open to the people. Here as elsewhere the state can do a great deal to help the spreading of knowledge and information and to assist mobility. But the point is that the kind of state action which really would increase opportunity is almost precisely the opposite of the “planning” which is now generally advocated and practiced. Most planners, it is true, promise that in the new planned world free choice of occupation will be scrupulously preserved or even increased. But there they promise more than they can possibly fulfill. If they want to plan, they must control the entry into the different trades and occupations, or the terms of remuneration, or both. In almost all known instances of planning, the establishment of such controls and restrictions was among the first measures taken. If such control were universally practiced and exercised by a single planning authority, one needs little

imagination to see what would become of the “free choice of occupation” promised. The “freedom of choice” would be purely fictitious, a mere promise to practice no discrimination where in the nature of the case discrimination must be practiced, and where all one could hope would be that the selection would be made on what the authority believed to be objective grounds.

There would be little difference if the planning authority confined itself to fixing the terms of employment and tried to regulate numbers by adjusting these terms. By prescribing the remuneration, it would no less effectively bar groups of people from entering many trades than by specifically excluding them. A rather plain girl who badly wants to become a saleswoman, a weakly boy who has set his heart on a job where his weakness handicaps him, as well as in general the apparently less able or less suitable are not necessarily excluded in a competitive society; if they value the position sufficiently they will frequently be able to get a start by a financial sacrifice and will later make good through qualities which at first are not so obvious. But when the authority fixes the remunerations for a whole category and the selection among the candidates is made by an objective test, the strength of their desire for the job will count for very little. The person whose qualifications are not of the standard type, or whose temperament is not of the ordinary kind, will no longer be able to come to special arrangements with an employer whose dispositions will fit in with his special needs: the person who prefers irregular hours or even a happy-go-lucky existence with a small and perhaps uncertain income to a regular routine will no longer have the choice. Conditions will be without exception what

in some measure they inevitably are in a large organization — or rather worse, because there will be no possibility of escape. We shall no longer be free to be rational or efficient only when and where we think it worth while; we shall all have to conform to the standards which the planning authority must fix in order to simplify its task. To make this immense task manageable, it will have to reduce the diversity of human capacities and inclinations to a few categories of readily interchangeable units and deliberately to disregard minor personal differences.

Although the professed aim of planning would be that man should cease to be a mere means, in fact — since it would be impossible to take account in the plan of individual likes and dislikes — the individual would more than ever become a mere means, to be used by the authority in the service of such abstractions as the “social welfare” or the “good of the community.”

That in a competitive society most things can be had at a price — though it is often a cruelly high price we have to pay — is a fact the importance of which can hardly be overrated. The alternative is not, however, complete freedom of choice, but orders and prohibitions which must be obeyed and, in the last resort, the favor of the mighty.

It is significant of the confusion prevailing on all these subjects that it should have become a cause for reproach that in a competitive society almost everything can be had at a price. If the people who protest against having the higher values of life brought into the “cash nexus” really mean that we should not be

allowed to sacrifice our lesser needs in order to preserve the higher values, and that the choice should be made for us, this demand must be regarded as rather peculiar and scarcely testifies to great respect for the dignity of the individual. That life and health, beauty and virtue, honor and peace of mind, can often be preserved only at considerable material cost, and that somebody must make the choice, is as undeniable as that we all are sometimes not prepared to make the material sacrifices necessary to protect those higher values against all injury.

To take only one example: We could, of course, reduce casualties by automobile accidents to zero if we were willing to bear the cost — if in no other way — by abolishing automobiles. And the same is true of thousands of other instances in which we are constantly risking life and health and all the fine values of the spirit, of ourselves and of our fellow-men, to further what we at the same time contemptuously describe as our material comfort. Nor can it be otherwise, since all our ends compete for the same means; and we could not strive for anything but these absolute values if they were on no account to be endangered.

That people should wish to be relieved of the bitter choice which hard facts often impose upon them is not surprising. But few want to be relieved through having the choice made for them by others. People just wish that the choice should not be necessary at all. And they are only too ready to believe that the choice is not really necessary, that it is imposed upon them merely by the particular economic system under which we live. What they resent is, in truth, that there is an economic problem.

In their wishful belief that there is really no longer an economic problem people have been confirmed by irresponsible talk about “potential plenty” — which, if it were a fact, would indeed mean that there is no economic problem which makes the choice inevitable. But although this snare has served socialist propaganda under various names as long as socialism has existed, it is still as palpably untrue as it was when it was first used over a hundred years ago. In all this time not one of the many people who have used it has produced a workable plan of how production could be increased so as to abolish even in western Europe what we regard as poverty — not to speak of the world as a whole. The reader may take it that whoever talks about potential plenty is either dishonest or does not know what he is talking about.⁴ Yet it is this false hope as much as anything which drives us along the road to planning.

While the popular movement still profits by this false belief, the claim that a planned economy would produce a substantially larger output than the competitive system is being progressively abandoned by most students of the problem. Even a good many economists with socialist views who have seriously studied the problems of central planning are now content to hope that a planned society will equal the efficiency of a competitive system; they advocate planning no longer because of its superior productivity but because it will enable us to secure a more just and equitable distribution of wealth. This is, indeed, the only argument for planning which can be seriously pressed. It is indisputable that if we want to secure a distribution of wealth which conforms to some predetermined standard, if we want

consciously to decide who is to have what, we must plan the whole economic system. But the question remains whether the price we should have to pay for the realization of somebody's ideal of justice is not bound to be more discontent and more oppression than was ever caused by the much-abused free play of economic forces.

But the question remains whether the price we should have to pay for the realization of somebody's ideal of justice is not bound to be more discontent and more oppression than was ever caused by the much-abused free play of economic forces.

We should be seriously deceiving ourselves if for these apprehensions we sought comfort in the consideration that the adoption of central planning would merely mean a return, after a brief spell of a free economy, to the ties and regulations which have governed economic activity through most ages, and that therefore the infringements of personal liberty need not be greater than they were before the age of laissez faire. This is a dangerous illusion. Even during the periods of European history when the regimentation of economic life went furthest, it amounted to little more than the creation of a general and semipermanent framework of rules within which the individual preserved a wide

free sphere. The apparatus of control then available would not have been adequate to impose more than very general directions. And even where the control was most complete it extended only to those activities of a person through which he took part in the social division of labor. In the much wider sphere in which he then still lived on his own products, he was free to act as he chose.

The situation is now entirely different. During the liberal era the progressive division of labor has created a situation where almost every one of our activities is part of a social process. This is a development which we cannot reverse, since it is only because of it that we can maintain the vastly increased population at anything like present standards. But, in consequence, the substitution of central planning for competition would require central direction of a much greater part of our lives than was ever attempted before. It could not stop at what we regard as our economic activities, because we are now for almost every part of our lives dependent on somebody else's economic activities.⁵ The passion for the "collective satisfaction of our needs," with which our socialists have so well prepared the way for totalitarianism, and which wants us to take our pleasures as well as our necessities at the appointed time and in the prescribed form, is, of course, partly intended as a means of political education. But it is also the result of the exigencies of planning, which consists essentially in depriving us of choice, in order to give us whatever fits best into the plan and that at a time determined by the plan.

It is often said that political freedom is meaningless without economic freedom. This is true enough, but in a sense almost

opposite from that in which the phrase is used by our planners. The economic freedom which is the prerequisite of any other freedom cannot be the freedom from economic care which the socialists promise us and which can be obtained only by relieving the individual at the same time of the necessity and of the power of choice; it must be the freedom of our economic activity which, with the right of choice, inevitably also carries the risk and the responsibility of that right.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. Would economic planning really “free us from the less important cares” ([para. 2](#)) of life?
2. How does the promise of economic planning affect our choices?
3. Why might people think that matters of economic life are of secondary importance only?
4. Why does Hayek approve of our striving for money?
5. What evidence does Hayek use to bolster his argument?
6. How would a planned economy constitute a monopoly?
7. What does Hayek have to say about poverty in an unplanned economy?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Hayek says in his first paragraph that a “directed economy must be run on more or less dictatorial lines.” Is this true? Consider that Hayek wrote in 1944 while the great planned economies were run by dictators. Do you consider that a modern planned economy must be dictatorial? If possible, research the economies of some modern

nations and examine their nature to determine whether they have the limitations that Hayek expects.

2. The principal point of Hayek’s chapter — and the main point of his entire book — is that any planned economy that produces socialist institutions will inevitably run the risk of becoming totalitarian. Decide whether he is right or not. Does every planned economy run the risks that he describes in terms of limiting choice of products to buy, careers to choose, or places to go? What is it in the nature of planning that causes such problems? Why are such economies dictatorial?
3. Why is an unplanned economy superior to a planned economy? Whom does the unplanned economy most benefit? Who is least benefited? In which kind of economy do you feel you would most prosper? Do you feel that your economy is now basically planned or basically unplanned? What would Hayek say about the economy that currently exists in our country? Treat these questions in a carefully reasoned argument.
4. Hayek says that “money is one of the greatest instruments of freedom ever invented by man” ([para. 3](#)). Write an essay directed as an open letter to America’s poor explaining why Hayek says this and why you agree or disagree with him. How hard do you think it will be for you to defend his statement? Who, in your judgment, would most find strong agreement with Hayek? What social problems are implied in accepting Hayek’s declaration?
5. Hayek implies that even a laissez-faire economy would be preferable to a planned economy. What is a laissez-faire economy? Research the term in relation to the economies of Western nations. What are the strengths of a laissez-faire economy? What are its weaknesses? To what extent do you now live in a laissez-faire economy?

CONNECTIONS

1. In [paragraph 22](#), Hayek begins to talk about the question of distribution of wealth. In an unplanned economy, there can be no

discussion of the distribution of wealth. Some people, such as Adam Smith (“[The Value of Labor](#)”) and Andrew Carnegie (“[The Gospel of Wealth](#)”) tell us, will become wealthier than others. Some will become enormously wealthy, while others may become extremely poor. How would Smith and Carnegie react to the points that Hayek makes about unequal distribution of wealth? If you are in favor of an unplanned economy, what do you feel should be done about the extremes of inequality we face in our current economy? How do these three writers justify extreme inequality, and what do they propose to do about it, if anything? Is planning the only way to deal with extreme inequality of wealth?

2. In *The Communist Manifesto*, [Karl Marx](#) holds views opposite those of F. A. Hayek. Compare their positions on the question of control of production and the role of the individual in society. Are there any points on which they seem to be in agreement? Is Marx proposing a planning committee or a planning person who might become what Hayek calls an economic dictator? How does Marx see his system working? How would Hayek counter Marx’s enthusiasm for socialism? Does Hayek take into consideration the class struggle that dominates Marx’s thinking? Do you regard the class struggle as significant in contemporary economics?
3. Hayek is against a planned economy and would probably be against establishing a minimum wage. Examine his essay to see if that is true, then contrast his views on the idea of a minimum wage with those of Barbara Ehrenreich in her essay “[Is the Middle Class Doomed?](#)”. What points of agreement can you find between these authors? Does Hayek have a clear sense of what the middle class is or how we define economic classes in the United States? Why would he be most likely to argue against Ehrenreich? Or do you think he would enthusiastically support her views?



Robert B. Reich *Why the Rich Are Getting Richer and the Poor, Poorer*



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ROBERT B. REICH (b. 1946) is professor of public policy at the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley, and previously served as secretary of labor in the first Clinton administration. He holds a graduate degree from Yale Law School, rather than a Ph.D. in economics. Nonetheless, he has

written numerous books on economics and has been a prominent lecturer for almost two decades. Reich's books include *The Future of Success: Working and Living in the New Economy* (2000); *Supercapitalism: The Transformation of Business, Democracy, and Everyday Life* (2007); *Saving Capitalism: For the Many, Not the Few* (2015); and *The Common Good* (2018). All of these have been best sellers, something unusual for the work of an academic concerned with economics. *The Work of Nations* (1991), from which this essay comes, is the distillation of many years' analysis of modern economic trends.

As a college student, Reich was an activist but not a radical. In 1968 he studied at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar with Bill Clinton and a number of others who became influential American policy makers. Reich is a specialist in policy studies — that is, the relationship of governmental policy to the economic health of the nation. Unlike those who champion free trade and unlimited expansion, Reich questions the existence of free trade by pointing to the effect of government taxation on business enterprise. Taxation — like many governmental policies regarding immigration, tariffs, and money supply — directly shapes the behavior of most companies. Reich feels that government must establish and execute an industrial policy that will benefit the nation.

Even though organized labor groups, such as industrial unions, have rejected much of his theorizing about labor, Reich has developed a reputation as a conciliator who can see opposite sides of a question and resolve them. He is known for his

denunciation of mergers, lawsuits, takeovers, and other deals that he believes simply churn money around rather than produce wealth. He feels that such maneuvers enrich a few predatory people but do not benefit labor in general — and, indeed, that the debt created by such deals harms labor in the long run.

In *The Next American Frontier* (1983), Reich insists that government, unions, and businesses must cooperate to create a workable program designed to improve the economy. Trusting to chance and free trade, he argues, will not work in the current economy. He also has said that the old assembly-line methods must give way to what he calls “flexible production,” involving smaller, customized runs of products for specific markets.

Reich’s *The Work of Nations* (1991), whose title draws on Adam Smith’s classic *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), examines the borderless nature of contemporary corporations. Multinational corporations are a reality, and as he points out in the following essay, their flexibility makes it possible for them to thrive by moving manufacturing plants from nation to nation. The reasons for moving are sometimes connected to lower wages but more often are connected to the infrastructure of a given nation. Reliable roads, plentiful electricity, well-educated workers, low crime rates, and political stability are all elements that make a location attractive to a multinational corporation.

REICH’S RHETORIC

The structure of “Why the Rich Are Getting Richer and the Poor, Poorer” is built on a metaphor: that of boats rising or falling with the tide. As Reich notes, “All Americans used to be in roughly the same economic boat” ([para. 2](#)), and when the economic tide rose, most people rose along with it. However, today “national borders no longer define our economic fates”; Reich therefore views Americans today as being in different boats, depending on their role in the economy, and his essay follows the fates of three distinct kinds of workers.

Examining the routine worker, he observes, “The boat containing routine producers is sinking rapidly” ([para. 3](#)). As he demonstrates, the need for routine production has declined in part because of improvements in production facilities. Much labor-intensive work has been replaced by machines. Modern factories often scramble to locate in places where production costs are lowest. People in other nations work at a fraction of the hourly rate of American workers, and because factories are relatively cheap to establish, they can be easily moved.

Reich continues the boat metaphor with “in-person servers.” The boat that carries these workers, he says, “is sinking as well, but somewhat more slowly and unevenly” ([para. 20](#)). Workers in restaurants, retail outlets, car washes, and other personal service industries often work part-time and have few health or other benefits. Their jobs are imperiled by machines as well, although not as much as manufacturing jobs are. Although the outlook for such workers is buoyed by a declining population, which will

reduce competition for their jobs, increased immigration may cancel this benefit.

Finally, Reich argues that the “vessel containing America’s symbolic analysts is rising” ([para. 28](#)). This third group contains the population that identifies and solves problems and brokers ideas. “Almost everyone around the world is buying the skills and insights of Americans who manipulate oral and visual symbols” ([para. 33](#)). Engineers, consultants, marketing experts, publicists, and those in entertainment fields all manage to cross national boundaries and prosper at a rate that is perhaps startling. As a result of an expanding world market, symbolic analysts do not depend only on the purchasing power of routine and in-service workers. Instead, they rely on the same global web that dominates the pattern of corporate structure.

Reich’s essay follows the fate of these three groups in turn to establish the pattern of change and expectation that will shape America’s economic future. His metaphor is deftly handled, and he includes details, examples, facts, and careful references to support his position.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Robert B. Reich’s “Why the Rich Are Getting Richer and the Poor, Poorer.” Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. Why and how does an individual’s position in the world economy depend on the function he/she performs in it?

2. Who are the “routine producers”? What will be their fate in the future?
3. Who are the “symbolic analysts” in our economy? How does one become a symbolic analyst?

Why the Rich Are Getting Richer and the Poor, Poorer

The division of labor is limited by the extent of the market.

—Adam Smith

An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (1776)

Regardless of how your job is officially classified (manufacturing, service, managerial, technical, secretarial, and so on), or the industry in which you work (automotive, steel, computer, advertising, finance, food processing), your real competitive position in the world economy is coming to depend on the function you perform in it. Herein lies the basic reason why incomes are diverging. The fortunes of routine producers are declining. In-person servers are also becoming poorer, although their fates are less clear-cut. But symbolic analysts — who solve, identify, and broker new problems — are, by and large, succeeding in the world economy.

All Americans used to be in roughly the same economic boat. Most rose or fell together as the corporations in which they were employed, the industries comprising such corporations, and the national economy as a whole became more productive — or languished. But national borders no longer define our economic fates. We are now in different boats, one sinking rapidly, one sinking more slowly, and the third rising steadily.

The boat containing routine producers is sinking rapidly. Recall that by midcentury routine production workers in the United States were paid relatively well. The giant pyramidlike organizations at the core of each major industry coordinated their prices and investments — avoiding the harsh winds of competition and thus maintaining healthy earnings. Some of these earnings, in turn, were reinvested in new plant and equipment (yielding ever-larger-scale economies); another portion went to top managers and investors. But a large and increasing portion went to middle managers and production workers. Work stoppages posed such a threat to high-volume production that organized labor was able to exact an ever-larger premium for its cooperation. And the pattern of wages established within the core corporations influenced the pattern throughout the national economy. Thus the growth of a relatively affluent middle class, able to purchase all the wondrous things produced in high volume by the core corporations.

But, as has been observed, the core is rapidly breaking down into global webs which earn their largest profits from clever problem-solving, -identifying, and brokering. As the costs of transporting standard things and of communicating information about them continue to drop, profit margins on high-volume, standardized production are thinning, because there are few barriers to entry. Modern factories and state-of-the-art machinery can be installed almost anywhere on the globe. Routine producers in the United States, then, are in direct competition with millions of routine producers in other nations. Twelve thousand people are added to the world's population every hour, most of whom, eventually, will

happily work for a small fraction of the wages of routine producers in America.¹

The consequence is clearest in older, heavy industries, where high-volume, standardized production continues its ineluctable move to where labor is cheapest and most accessible around the world. Thus, for example, the Maquiladora factories cluttered along the Mexican side of the U.S. border in the sprawling shanty towns of Tijuana, Mexicali, Nogales, Agua Prieta, and Ciudad Juárez — factories owned mostly by Americans, but increasingly by Japanese — in which more than a half million routine producers assemble parts into finished goods to be shipped into the United States.

Twelve thousand people are added to the world's population every hour, most of whom, eventually, will happily work for a small fraction of the wages of routine producers in America.

The same story is unfolding worldwide. Until the late 1970s, AT&T had depended on routine producers in Shreveport, Louisiana, to assemble standard telephones. It then discovered that routine producers in Singapore would perform the same tasks at a far lower cost. Facing intense competition from other global webs, AT&T's strategic brokers felt compelled to switch. So in the early

1980s they stopped hiring routine producers in Shreveport and began hiring cheaper routine producers in Singapore. But under this kind of pressure for ever-lower high-volume production costs, today's Singaporean can easily end up as yesterday's Louisianan. By the late 1980s, AT&T's strategic brokers found that routine producers in Thailand were eager to assemble telephones for a small fraction of the wages of routine producers in Singapore. Thus, in 1989, AT&T stopped hiring Singaporeans to make telephones and began hiring even cheaper routine producers in Thailand.

The search for ever-lower wages has not been confined to heavy industry. Routine data processing is equally footloose. Key punch operators located anywhere around the world can enter data into computers, linked by satellite or transoceanic fiber-optic cable, and take it out again. As the rates charged by satellite networks continue to drop, and as more satellites and fiber-optic cables become available (reducing communication costs still further), routine data processors in the United States find themselves in ever more direct competition with their counterparts abroad, who are often eager to work for far less.

By 1990, keypunch operators in the United States were earning, at most, \$6.50 per hour. But keypunch operators throughout the rest of the world were willing to work for a fraction of this. Thus, many potential American data-processing jobs were disappearing, and the wages and benefits of the remaining ones were in decline. Typical was Saztec International, a \$20-million-a-year data-processing firm headquartered in Kansas City, whose American

strategic brokers contracted with routine data processors in Manila and with American-owned firms that needed such data-processing services. Compared with the average Philippine income of \$1,700 per year, data-entry operators working for Saztec earn the princely sum of \$2,650. The remainder of Saztec's employees were American problem-solvers and -identifiers, searching for ways to improve the worldwide system and find new uses to which it could be put.²

By 1990, American Airlines was employing over 1,000 data processors in Barbados and the Dominican Republic to enter names and flight numbers from used airline tickets (flown daily to Barbados from airports around the United States) into a giant computer bank located in Dallas. Chicago publisher R. R. Donnelley was sending entire manuscripts to Barbados for entry into computers in preparation for printing. The New York Life Insurance Company was dispatching insurance claims to Castleisland, Ireland, where routine producers, guided by simple directions, entered the claims and determined the amounts due, then instantly transmitted the computations back to the United States. (When the firm advertised in Ireland for twenty-five data-processing jobs, it received six hundred applications.) And McGraw-Hill was processing subscription renewal and marketing information for its magazines in nearby Galway. Indeed, literally millions of routine workers around the world were receiving information, converting it into computer-readable form, and then sending it back — at the speed of electronic impulses — whence it came.

The simple coding of computer software has also entered into world commerce. India, with a large English-speaking population of technicians happy to do routine programming cheaply, is proving to be particularly attractive to global webs in need of this service. By 1990, Texas Instruments maintained a software development facility in Bangalore, linking fifty Indian programmers by satellite to TI's Dallas headquarters. Spurred by this and similar ventures, the Indian government was building a teleport in Poona, intended to make it easier and less expensive for many other firms to send their routine software design specifications for coding.³

This shift of routine production jobs from advanced to developing nations is a great boon to many workers in such nations who otherwise would be jobless or working for much lower wages. These workers, in turn, now have more money with which to purchase symbolic-analytic services from advanced nations (often embedded within all sorts of complex products). The trend is also beneficial to everyone around the world who can now obtain high-volume, standardized products (including information and software) more cheaply than before.

But these benefits do not come without certain costs. In particular the burden is borne by those who no longer have good-paying routine production jobs within advanced economies like the United States. Many of these people used to belong to unions or at least benefited from prevailing wage rates established in collective bargaining agreements. But as the old corporate bureaucracies

have flattened into global webs, bargaining leverage has been lost. Indeed, the tacit national bargain is no more.

Despite the growth in the number of new jobs in the United States, union membership has withered. In 1960, 35 percent of all nonagricultural workers in America belonged to a union. But by 1980 that portion had fallen to just under a quarter, and by 1989 to about 17 percent. Excluding government employees, union membership was down to 13.4 percent.⁴ This was a smaller proportion even than in the early 1930s, before the National Labor Relations Act created a legally protected right to labor representation. The drop in membership has been accompanied by a growing number of collective bargaining agreements to freeze wages at current levels, reduce wage levels of entering workers, or reduce wages overall. This is an important reason why the long economic recovery that began in 1982 produced a smaller rise in unit labor costs than any of the eight recoveries since World War II — the low rate of unemployment during its course notwithstanding.

Routine production jobs have vanished fastest in traditional unionized industries (autos, steel, and rubber, for example), where average wages have kept up with inflation. This is because the jobs of older workers in such industries are protected by seniority; the youngest workers are the first to be laid off. Faced with a choice of cutting wages or cutting the number of jobs, a majority of union members (secure in the knowledge that there are many who are junior to them who will be laid off first) often have voted for the latter.

Thus the decline in union membership has been most striking among young men entering the workforce without a college education. In the early 1950s, more than 40 percent of this group joined unions; by the late 1980s, less than 20 percent (if public employees are excluded, less than 10 percent).⁵ In steelmaking, for example, although many older workers remained employed, almost half of all routine steelmaking jobs in America vanished between 1974 and 1988 (from 480,000 to 260,000). Similarly with automobiles: during the 1980s, the United Auto Workers lost 500,000 members — one-third of their total at the start of the decade. General Motors alone cut 150,000 American production jobs during the 1980s (even as it added employment abroad). Another consequence of the same phenomenon: the gap between the average wages of unionized and nonunionized workers widened dramatically — from 14.6 percent in 1973 to 20.4 percent by end of the 1980s.⁶ The lesson is clear. If you drop out of high school or have no more than a high school diploma, do not expect a good routine production job to be awaiting you.

If you drop out of high school or have no more than a high school diploma, do not expect a good routine production job to be awaiting you.

Also vanishing are lower- and middle-level management jobs involving routine production. Between 1981 and 1986, more than

780,000 foremen, supervisors, and section chiefs lost their jobs through plant closings and layoffs.⁷ Large numbers of assistant division heads, assistant directors, assistant managers, and vice presidents also found themselves jobless. GM shed more than 40,000 white-collar employees and planned to eliminate another 25,000 by the mid-1990s.⁸ As America's core pyramids metamorphosed into global webs, many middle-level routine producers were as obsolete as routine workers on the line.

As has been noted, foreign-owned webs are hiring some Americans to do routine production in the United States. Philips, Sony, and Toyota factories are popping up all over — to the self-congratulatory applause of the nation's governors and mayors, who have lured them with promises of tax abatements and new sewers, among other amenities. But as these ebullient politicians will soon discover, the foreign-owned factories are highly automated and will become far more so in years to come. Routine production jobs account for a small fraction of the cost of producing most items in the United States and other advanced nations, and this fraction will continue to decline sharply as computer-integrated robots take over. In 1977 it took routine producers thirty-five hours to assemble an automobile in the United States; it is estimated that by the mid-1990s, Japanese-owned factories in America will be producing finished automobiles using only eight hours of a routine producer's time.⁹

The productivity and resulting wages of American workers who run such robotic machinery may be relatively high, but there may not be many such jobs to go around. A case in point: in the late

1980s, Nippon Steel joined with America's ailing Inland Steel to build a new \$400 million cold-rolling mill fifty miles west of Gary, Indiana. The mill was celebrated for its state-of-the-art technology, which cut the time to produce a coil of steel from twelve days to about one hour. In fact, the entire plant could be run by a small team of technicians, which became clear when Inland subsequently closed two of its old cold-rolling mills, laying off hundreds of routine workers. Governors and mayors take note: your much-ballyhooed foreign factories may end up employing distressingly few of your constituents.

Overall, the decline in routine jobs has hurt men more than women. This is because the routine production jobs held by men in high-volume metal-bending manufacturing industries had paid higher wages than the routine production jobs held by women in textiles and data processing. As both sets of jobs have been lost, American women in routine production have gained more equal footing with American men — equally poor footing, that is. This is a major reason why the gender gap between male and female wages began to close during the 1980s.

The second of the three boats, carrying in-person servers, is sinking as well, but somewhat more slowly and unevenly. Most in-person servers are paid at or just slightly above the minimum wage and many work only part-time, with the result that their take-home pay is modest, to say the least. Nor do they typically receive all the benefits (health care, life insurance, disability, and so forth) garnered by routine producers in large manufacturing corporations or by symbolic analysts affiliated with the more affluent threads of

global webs.¹⁰ In-person servers are sheltered from the direct effects of global competition and, like everyone else, benefit from access to lower-cost products from around the world. But they are not immune to its indirect effects.

For one thing, in-person servers increasingly compete with former routine production workers, who, no longer able to find well-paying routine production jobs, have few alternatives but to seek in-person service jobs. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that of the 2.8 million manufacturing workers who lost their jobs during the early 1980s, fully one-third were rehired in service jobs paying at least 20 percent less.¹¹ In-person servers must also compete with high school graduates and dropouts who years before had moved easily into routine production jobs but no longer can. And if demographic predictions about the American workforce in the first decades of the twenty-first century are correct (and they are likely to be, since most of the people who will comprise the workforce are already identifiable), most new entrants into the job market will be black or Hispanic men, or women — groups that in years past have possessed relatively weak technical skills. This will result in an even larger number of people crowding into in-person services. Finally, in-person servers will be competing with growing numbers of immigrants, both legal and illegal, for whom in-person services will comprise the most accessible jobs. (It is estimated that between the mid-1980s and the end of the century, about a quarter of all workers entering the American labor force will be immigrants.¹²)

Perhaps the fiercest competition that in-person servers face comes from labor-saving machinery (much of it invented, designed, fabricated, or assembled in other nations, of course). Automated tellers, computerized cashiers, automatic car washes, robotized vending machines, self-service gasoline pumps, and all similar gadgets substitute for the human beings that customers once encountered. Even telephone operators are fast disappearing, as electronic sensors and voice simulators become capable of carrying on conversations that are reasonably intelligent and always polite. Retail sales workers — among the largest groups of in-person servers — are similarly imperiled. Through personal computers linked to television screens, tomorrow's consumers will be able to buy furniture, appliances, and all sorts of electronic toys from their living rooms — examining the merchandise from all angles, selecting whatever color, size, special features, and price seem most appealing, and then transmitting the order instantly to warehouses from which the selections will be shipped directly to their homes. So, too, with financial transactions, airline and hotel reservations, rental car agreements, and similar contracts, which will be executed between consumers in their homes and computer banks somewhere else on the globe.¹³

Human beings, it seems, have an almost insatiable desire for personal attention.

Advanced economies like the United States will continue to generate sizable numbers of new in-person service jobs, of course, the automation of older ones notwithstanding. For every bank teller who loses her job to an automated teller, three new jobs open for aerobics instructors. Human beings, it seems, have an almost insatiable desire for personal attention. But the intense competition nevertheless ensures that the wages of in-person servers will remain relatively low. In-person servers — working on their own, or else dispersed widely amid many small establishments, filling all sorts of personal-care niches — cannot readily organize themselves into labor unions or create powerful lobbies to limit the impact of such competition.

In two respects, demographics will work in favor of in-person servers, buoying their collective boat slightly. First, as has been noted, the rate of growth of the American workforce is slowing. In particular, the number of young workers is shrinking. Between 1985 and 1995, the number of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds will have declined by 17.5 percent. Thus, employers will have more incentive to hire and train in-person servers whom they might previously have avoided. But this demographic relief from the competitive pressures will be only temporary. The cumulative procreative energies of the postwar baby-boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) will result in a new surge of workers by 2010 or thereabouts.¹⁴ And immigration — both legal and illegal — shows every sign of increasing in years to come.

Next, by the second decade of the twenty-first century, the number of Americans aged sixty-five and over will be rising precipitously,

as the baby-boomers reach retirement age and live longer. Their life expectancies will lengthen not just because fewer of them will have smoked their way to their graves and more will have eaten better than their parents, but also because they will receive all sorts of expensive drugs and therapies designed to keep them alive — barely. By 2035, twice as many Americans will be elderly as in 1988, and the number of octogenarians is expected to triple. As these decaying baby-boomers ingest all the chemicals and receive all the treatments, they will need a great deal of personal attention. Millions of deteriorating bodies will require nurses, nursing-home operators, hospital administrators, orderlies, home-care providers, hospice aides, and technicians to operate and maintain all the expensive machinery that will monitor and temporarily stave off final disintegration. There might even be a booming market for euthanasia specialists. In-person servers catering to the old and ailing will be in strong demand.¹⁵

One small problem: the decaying baby-boomers will not have enough money to pay for these services. They will have used up their personal savings years before. Their Social Security payments will, of course, have been used by the government to pay for the previous generation's retirement and to finance much of the budget deficits of the 1980s. Moreover, with relatively fewer young Americans in the population, the supply of housing will likely exceed the demand, with the result that the boomers' major investments — their homes — will be worth less (in inflation-adjusted dollars) when they retire than they planned for. In consequence, the huge cost of caring for the graying boomers will fall on many of the same people who will be paid to care for them.

It will be like a great sump pump: in-person servers of the twenty-first century will have an abundance of health-care jobs, but a large portion of their earnings will be devoted to Social Security payments and income taxes, which will in turn be used to pay their salaries. The net result: no real improvement in their standard of living.

The standard of living of in-person servers also depends, indirectly, on the standard of living of the Americans they serve who are engaged in world commerce. To the extent that these Americans are richly rewarded by the rest of the world for what they contribute, they will have more money to lavish upon in-person services. Here we find the only form of “trickle-down” economics that has a basis in reality. A waitress in a town whose major factory has just been closed is unlikely to earn a high wage or enjoy much job security; in a swank resort populated by film producers and banking moguls, she is apt to do reasonably well. So, too, with nations. In-person servers in Bangladesh may spend their days performing roughly the same tasks as in-person servers in the United States, but have a far lower standard of living for their efforts. The difference comes in the value that their customers add to the world economy.

Unlike the boats of routine producers and in-person servers, however, the vessel containing America’s symbolic analysts is rising. Worldwide demand for their insights is growing as the ease and speed of communicating them steadily increases. Not every symbolic analyst is rising as quickly or as dramatically as every other, of course; symbolic analysts at the low end are barely

holding their own in the world economy. But symbolic analysts at the top are in such great demand worldwide that they have difficulty keeping track of all their earnings. Never before in history has opulence on such a scale been gained by people who have earned it, and done so legally.

Among symbolic analysts in the middle range are American scientists and researchers who are busily selling their discoveries to global enterprise webs. They are not limited to American customers. If the strategic brokers in General Motors' headquarters refuse to pay a high price for a new means of making high-strength ceramic engines dreamed up by a team of engineers affiliated with Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, the strategic brokers of Honda or Mercedes-Benz are likely to be more than willing.

So, too, with the insights of America's ubiquitous management consultants, which are being sold for large sums to eager entrepreneurs in Europe and Latin America. Also, the insights of America's energy consultants, sold for even larger sums to Arab sheikhs. American design engineers are providing insights to Olivetti, Mazda, Siemens, and other global webs; American marketers, techniques for learning what worldwide consumers will buy; American advertisers, ploys for ensuring that they actually do. American architects are issuing designs and blueprints for opera houses, art galleries, museums, luxury hotels, and residential complexes in the world's major cities; American commercial property developers, marketing these properties to worldwide investors and purchasers.

Americans who specialize in the gentle art of public relations are in demand by corporations, governments, and politicians in virtually every nation. So, too, are American political consultants, some of whom, at this writing, are advising the Hungarian Socialist Party, the remnant of Hungary's ruling Communists, on how to salvage a few parliamentary seats in the nation's first free election in more than forty years. Also at this writing, a team of American agricultural consultants is advising the managers of a Soviet farm collective employing 1,700 Russians eighty miles outside Moscow. As noted, American investment bankers and lawyers specializing in financial circumnavigations are selling their insights to Asians and Europeans who are eager to discover how to make large amounts of money by moving large amounts of money.

Developing nations, meanwhile, are hiring American civil engineers to advise on building roads and dams. The present thaw in the Cold War will no doubt expand these opportunities. American engineers from Bechtel (a global firm notable for having employed both Caspar Weinberger and George Shultz for much larger sums than either earned in the Reagan administration) have begun helping the Soviets design and install a new generation of nuclear reactors. Nations also are hiring American bankers and lawyers to help them renegotiate the terms of their loans with global banks, and Washington lobbyists to help them with Congress, the Treasury, the World Bank, the IMF, and other politically sensitive institutions. In fits of obvious desperation, several nations emerging from communism have even hired American economists to teach them about capitalism.

Almost everyone around the world is buying the skills and insights of Americans who manipulate oral and visual symbols — musicians, sound engineers, film producers, makeup artists, directors, cinematographers, actors and actresses, boxers, scriptwriters, songwriters, and set designers. Among the wealthiest of symbolic analysts are Steven Spielberg, Bill Cosby, Charles Schulz, Eddie Murphy, Sylvester Stallone, Madonna, and other star directors and performers — who are almost as well known on the streets of Dresden and Tokyo as in the Back Bay of Boston. Less well rewarded but no less renowned are the unctuous anchors on Turner Broadcasting’s Cable News, who appear daily, via satellite, in places ranging from Vietnam to Nigeria. Vanna White is the world’s most-watched game-show hostess. Behind each of these familiar faces is a collection of American problem-solvers, -identifiers, and brokers who train, coach, advise, promote, amplify, direct, groom, represent, and otherwise add value to their talents.¹⁶

There are also the insights of senior American executives who occupy the world headquarters of global “American” corporations and the national or regional headquarters of global “foreign” corporations. Their insights are duly exported to the rest of the world through the webs of global enterprise. IBM does not export many machines from the United States, for example. Big Blue makes machines all over the globe and services them on the spot. Its prime American exports are symbolic and analytic. From IBM’s world headquarters in Armonk, New York, emanate strategic brokerage and related management services bound for the rest of

the world. In return, IBM's top executives are generously rewarded.

The most important reason for this expanding world market and increasing global demand for the symbolic and analytic insights of Americans has been the dramatic improvement in worldwide communication and transportation technologies. Designs, instructions, advice, and visual and audio symbols can be communicated more and more rapidly around the globe, with ever-greater precision and at ever-lower cost. Madonna's voice can be transported to billions of listeners, with perfect clarity, on digital compact discs. A new invention emanating from engineers in Battelle's laboratory in Columbus, Ohio, can be sent almost anywhere via modem, in a form that will allow others to examine it in three dimensions through enhanced computer graphics. When face-to-face meetings are still required — and videoconferencing will not suffice — it is relatively easy for designers, consultants, advisers, artists, and executives to board supersonic jets and, in a matter of hours, meet directly with their worldwide clients, customers, audiences, and employees.

One of the best-kept secrets among symbolic analysts is that so many of them enjoy their work. In fact, much of it does not count as work at all, in the traditional sense.

With rising demand comes rising compensation. Whether in the form of licensing fees, fees for service, salaries, or shares in final profits, the economic result is much the same. There are also nonpecuniary rewards. One of the best-kept secrets among symbolic analysts is that so many of them enjoy their work. In fact, much of it does not count as work at all, in the traditional sense. The work of routine producers and in-person servers is typically monotonous; it causes muscles to tire or weaken and involves little independence or discretion. The “work” of symbolic analysts, by contrast, often involves puzzles, experiments, games, a significant amount of chatter, and substantial discretion over what to do next. Few routine producers or in-person servers would “work” if they did not need to earn the money. Many symbolic analysts would “work” even if money were no object.

At midcentury, when America was a national market dominated by core pyramid-shaped corporations, there were constraints on the earnings of people at the highest rungs. First and most obviously, the market for their services was largely limited to the borders of the nation. In addition, whatever conceptual value they might contribute was small relative to the value gleaned from large scale — and it was dependent on large scale for whatever income it was to summon. Most of the problems to be identified and solved had to do with enhancing the efficiency of production and improving the flow of materials, parts, assembly, and distribution. Inventors searched for the rare breakthrough revealing an entirely new product to be made in high volume; management consultants, executives, and engineers thereafter tried to speed and synchronize its manufacture, to better achieve scale

efficiencies; advertisers and marketers sought then to whet the public's appetite for the standard item that emerged. Since white-collar earnings increased with larger scale, there was considerable incentive to expand the firm; indeed, many of America's core corporations grew far larger than scale economies would appear to have justified.

By the 1990s, in contrast, the earnings of symbolic analysts were limited neither by the size of the national market nor by the volume of production of the firms with which they were affiliated. The marketplace was worldwide, and conceptual value was high relative to value added from scale efficiencies.

There had been another constraint on high earnings, which also gave way by the 1990s. At midcentury, the compensation awarded to top executives and advisers of the largest of America's core corporations could not be grossly out of proportion to that of low-level production workers. It would be unseemly for executives who engaged in highly visible rounds of bargaining with labor unions, and who routinely responded to government requests to moderate prices, to take home wages and benefits wildly in excess of what other Americans earned. Unless white-collar executives restrained themselves, moreover, blue-collar production workers could not be expected to restrain their own demands for higher wages. Unless both groups exercised restraint, the government could not be expected to forbear from imposing direct controls and regulations.

At the same time, the wages of production workers could not be allowed to sink too low, lest there be insufficient purchasing power in the economy. After all, who would buy all the goods flowing out of American factories if not American workers? This, too, was part of the tacit bargain struck between American managers and their workers.

Recall the oft-repeated corporate platitude of the era about the chief executive's responsibility to carefully weigh and balance the interests of the corporation's disparate stakeholders. Under the stewardship of the corporate statesman, no set of stakeholders — least of all white-collar executives — was to gain a disproportionately large share of the benefits of corporate activity; nor was any stakeholder — especially the average worker — to be left with a share that was disproportionately small. Banal though it was, this idea helped to maintain the legitimacy of the core American corporation in the eyes of most Americans, and to ensure continued economic growth.

But by the 1990s, these informal norms were evaporating, just as (and largely because) the core American corporation was vanishing. The links between top executives and the American production worker were fading: an ever-increasing number of subordinates and contractees were foreign, and a steadily growing number of American routine producers were working for foreign-owned firms. An entire cohort of middle-level managers, who had once been deemed “white collar,” had disappeared; and, increasingly, American executives were exporting their insights to global enterprise webs.

As the American corporation itself became a global web almost indistinguishable from any other, its stakeholders were turning into a large and diffuse group, spread over the world. Such global stakeholders were less visible, and far less noisy, than national stakeholders. And as the American corporation sold its goods and services all over the world, the purchasing power of American workers became far less relevant to its economic survival.

Thus have the inhibitions been removed. The salaries and benefits of America's top executives, and many of their advisers and consultants, have soared to what years before would have been unimaginable heights, even as those of other Americans have declined.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What are symbolic analysts? Give some examples from your own experience.
2. What is the apparent relationship between higher education and an educated worker's prospects for wealth?
3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with Reich's description and analysis of routine workers and in-service workers?
4. If Reich's analysis is correct, which gender or social groups are likely to be most harmed by modern economic circumstances in America? Which are most likely to become wealthy? Why?
5. Are symbolic analysts inherently more valuable to our society than routine or in-service workers? Why do symbolic analysts command so much more wealth?
6. Which of the three groups Reich mentions do you see as having the greatest potential for growth in the next thirty years?

 SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Judging from the views that Reich holds about decreasing job opportunities for all three groups of workers, how will increased immigration affect the American economy? Is immigration a hopeful sign? Is it a danger to the economy? How do most people seem to perceive the effect of increased immigration?
2. To what extent do you think Reich is correct about the growing wealth of symbolic analysts? He says, “Never before in history has opulence on such a scale been gained by people who have earned it, and done so legally” ([para. 28](#)). Do you see yourself as a symbolic analyst? How do you see your future in relation to the three economic groups Reich describes?
3. Reich says, “Few routine producers or in-person servers would ‘work’ if they did not need to earn the money. Many symbolic analysts would ‘work’ even if money were no object” ([para. 36](#)). Is this true? Examine your own experience — along with the experience of others you know — and defend or attack this view. How accurate do you consider Reich to be in his analysis of the way various workers view their work?
4. Describe the changes that have taken place in the American economy since 1960, according to this essay. How have they affected the way Americans work and the work that Americans can expect to find? How have your personal opportunities been broadened or narrowed by the changes? Do you feel the changes have been good for the country or not? Why?
5. Reich’s view of the great success of Japanese corporations and of their presence as manufacturing giants in the United States and elsewhere is largely positive. He has pointed out elsewhere that Honda and other manufacturers in the United States provide jobs and municipal income that would otherwise go to other nations. What is your view of the presence of large Japanese corporations in the United States? What is your view of other nations’ manufacturing facilities in the United States?

6. Why are the rich getting richer and the poor, poorer? Examine the kinds of differences between the rich and the poor that Reich describes. Is the process of increasing riches for the rich and increasing poverty for the poor inevitable, or will it begin to change in the near future?

CONNECTIONS

1. Karl Marx (“[The Communist Manifesto](#)”) warns against globalism in the economy in part because it harms local industry and damages local styles and customs. How would Reich counter those fears? Is it clear that Reich approves of the new economy he describes, or does he accept globalism as a form of economic evolution? Would he be likely to agree with Andrew Carnegie ([The Gospel of Wealth](#)) that the laws of competition and accumulation operate in the new economy at least as forcefully as they did in Carnegie’s time? Does he in any way seem approving of Marx’s theories?
2. Robert Reich makes a distinction between symbolic analysts and routine workers. Barbara Ehrenreich in “[Is the Middle Class Doomed?](#)” does not make such a distinction, although her focus is entirely on routine workers. How would Reich respond to Ehrenreich’s concerns for the welfare of routine workers? What advice would he have for them? How would Ehrenreich respond to Robert Reich’s picture of the current economy? Both authors wrote more than twenty years ago. How would you update their views? Has our economy solved some of the problems they raise?
3. Reich examines what seems to be a new form for the economy now that free trade is essentially a reality and major foreign nations — like China and India — are creating enormous wealth while Western industrial nations are losing industries and jobs to those countries. How would Reich respond to Adam Smith’s (“[The Value of Labor](#)”) concepts of how a nation should value labor? What are the differences Reich sees in the current economy as compared with that of Smith’s time? Would he feel that any of Smith’s principles regarding how we should value labor apply to our new economy?

Establish Reich's position regarding Smith's basic principles. Are the laborers Smith talks about similar to or different from the laborers Reich talks about?



Robin Wall Kimmerer *The Gift of Strawberries*



Robin Kimmerer

DR. ROBIN WALL KIMMERER (b. 1951) is a plant ecologist, writer, mother, and distinguished professor at the State of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse. She is the founding director of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment and an enrolled member of the Citizen

Potawatomi Nation. Dr. Kimmerer's interests in restoration include not only restoration of ecological communities but of our relationships to land. Her grandfather was Potawatomi but was taken as a boy to the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. There, he was forbidden to speak his own language, as was the case at Indian boarding schools across the country. Thus, as a result of linguistic imperialism, in order to reconnect with the wisdom of her ancestry, Dr. Kimmerer is currently learning Anishinaabe, the language of the Potawatomi.

Kimmerer grew up in the woods of upstate New York with a particular affection for the Adirondacks. She credits her upbringing near a forested environment with nurturing her passionate interest in plants and ecology. She feels that because she was raised away from the Potawatomi people she lost some of the ancestral knowledge about plants and the forest. Yet, she also has said that because of her childhood experiences she was aware that she intended to be a botanist since she was very young. At one point she said she was born to be a botanist.

One of her purposes, both in her teaching and her writing, is to rediscover and apply some of the Native American reverence for our environment. Even though she is trained as a scientist, she feels there is a way of knowing, perhaps intuitive, perhaps spiritual, that develops from an immersion in the natural world. She thinks deeply, for example, about the ways in which plants communicate with each other, how they protect themselves, and how they contribute to cleansing the environment. She also

marvels at the ways in which they provide us with food, clean air, and medicinal material.

Kimmerer has written important books about the natural world. Her *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses* (2005) revealed many surprises about moss, which brings together indigenous and scientific knowledge of the ways in which these plants benefit us and manage their part of the forest. This book won the John Burroughs Prize for Nature Writing. Her most recent book, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* (2015), includes the chapter presented here, “The Gift of Strawberries,” which approaches the idea of wealth from an indigenous perspective. The concept of wealth appears in this essay in a form that might be almost unrecognizable to the other authors in this section. Kimmerer talks about intuitive and spiritual knowledge alongside more scientific or logical way of knowing, and by bringing that kind of thoughtfulness to bear on the issues of economics she produces a new understanding of old ways.

KIMMERER’S RHETORIC

Kimmerer identifies herself as both a scientist and a poet. From the first, we sense in her writing something of the poet’s interest in using metaphor. She begins with her story about a childhood watching the wild strawberries blooming in fields near her home. But soon those strawberries, which she identifies as a gift of nature, become a metaphor for what she calls a gift economy. The gift economy, we learn slowly, is based on relationships among

people who see gifts as demanding reciprocity between the giver and the receiver. As she says, “in a gift economy, gifts are not free” ([para. 22](#)) and “The currency of a gift economy is, at its root, reciprocity,” which means that the giver, too, presses a gift onward and receives a gift in the future. In such an economy people live with a “bundle of responsibilities.”

She goes on to contrast the gift economy, which is tied closely to the land and what the land produces, with the market economy, in which things such as strawberries become commodities. As she says in [paragraph 18](#), “It’s the relationship between producer and consumer that changes everything.” Store-bought strawberries do not qualify as a gift because they are commodified and must be treated as private property, unlike wild strawberries, which are available to all. Kimmerer records her own lesson in economics in [paragraphs 14](#) and [15](#) when she worked for Mrs. Crandall on Crandall’s farm, where like many farmers she grew strawberries and hired children to pick them. Kimmerer was paid 10¢ for a quart, but she soon saw that Mrs. Crandall sold them for 60¢ a quart. It would have taken the children six hours of work to buy one quart of farmed strawberries. This was a lasting way to learn how the market economy works. In the process of introducing us to her experience she carefully characterizes Mrs. Crandall as not only “persnickety,” but grasping and ungenerous when she warned the children that these were her strawberries, not theirs. This was like a “Keep Off” sign on a piece of property.

Kimmerer writes from the perspective of her childhood and invokes stories and sayings passed down from her indigenous

American ancestors, inviting the reader to consider their, and her, perspective. Indigenous people regarded the land as communal and not as property at all. They see the vegetable produce of the land as gifts to all, but they also see that the gifts were not entirely free. The land needs tending and renewal, just as gifts to individuals are not totally free because it is expected that the receiver of a gift will in turn present gifts of his or her own in a reciprocal manner.

Kimmerer presents us with a dream vision, a rhetorical technique familiar in old English literature. Beginning in [paragraph 24](#) Kimmerer tells us about her dream of being in a market in the Andes where she had spent time and where she had “paid the *gringa* prices” ([para. 23](#)) for papaya, and even strawberries. But in her dream the same market had all the produce and all the items available for free. She offered to pay for some things, but the vendors refused her money. She soon learned in her dream that she could not purchase anything, but that anything she wanted would be a gift. As she said, she felt a sense of total euphoria, a sense of gratitude for the gifts before her. The result was that she filled her basket only half full. It was enough. She could have had cheese, but she refused. The surprise for her was that she knew if the goods were for sale, even for a low price, she would have filled her basket in an effort to get as much as she could. “But when everything became a gift, I felt self-restraint” ([para. 25](#)). At the end, the point Kimmerer has made is that living in a gift exchange economy requires a respect for the gifts of nature and inhibits us from exploiting it to exhaustion.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Robin Kimmerer's "The Gift of Strawberries." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. How does Kimmerer define a gift?
2. What is a gift economy?
3. How does a market economy differ from a gift economy?

The Gift of Strawberries

I once heard Evon Peter a Gwich'in man,¹ a father, a husband, an environmental activist, and Chief of Arctic Village, a small village in northeastern Alaska introduce himself simply as “a boy who was raised by a river.” A description as smooth and slippery as a river rock. Did he mean only that he grew up near its banks? Or was the river responsible for rearing him, for teaching him the things he needed to live? Did it feed him, body and soul? Raised by a river: I suppose both meanings are true you can hardly have one without the other.

In a way, I was raised by strawberries, fields of them. Not to exclude the maples, hemlocks, white pines, goldenrod, asters, violets, and mosses of upstate New York, but it was the wild strawberries, beneath dewy leaves on an almost-summer morning, who gave me my sense of the world, my place in it. Behind our house were miles of old hay fields divided by stone walls, long abandoned from farming but not yet grown up to forest. After the school bus chugged up our hill, I'd throw down my red plaid book bag, change my clothes before my mother could think of a chore, and jump across the crick to go wandering in the goldenrod. Our mental maps had all the landmarks we kids needed: the fort under the sumacs, the rock pile, the river, the big pine with branches so evenly spaced you could climb to the top as if it were a ladder — and the strawberry patches.

White petals with a yellow center — like a little wild rose — they dotted the acres of curl grass in May during the Flower Moon, *waabigwanigiizis*. We kept good track of them, peeking under the trifoliate leaves to check their progress as we ran through on our way to catch frogs. After the flower finally dropped its petals, a tiny green nub appeared in its place, and as the days got longer and warmer it swelled to a small white berry. These were sour but we ate them anyway, impatient for the real thing.

You could smell ripe strawberries before you saw them, the fragrance mingling with the smell of sun on damp ground. It was the smell of June, the last day of school, when we were set free, and the Strawberry Moon, *ode'mini-giizis*. I'd lie on my stomach in my favorite patches, watching the berries grow sweeter and bigger under the leaves. Each tiny wild berry was scarcely bigger than a raindrop, dimpled with seeds under the cap of leaves. From that vantage point I could pick only the reddest of the red, leaving the pink ones for tomorrow.

Even now, after more than fifty Strawberry Moons, finding a patch of wild strawberries still touches me with a sensation of surprise, a feeling of unworthiness and gratitude for the generosity and kindness that comes with an unexpected gift all wrapped in red and green. "Really? For me? Oh, you shouldn't have." After fifty years they still raise the question of how to respond to their generosity. Sometimes it feels like a silly question with a very simple answer: eat them.

But I know that someone else has wondered these same things. In our Creation stories the origin of strawberries is important. Sky woman's beautiful daughter, whom she carried in her womb from Skyworld, grew on the good green earth, loving and loved by all the other beings. But tragedy befell her when she died giving birth to her twins, Flint and Sapling. Heartbroken, Sky woman buried her beloved daughter in the earth. Her final gifts, our most revered plants, grew from her body. The strawberry arose from her heart. In Potawatomi, the strawberry is *ode min*, the heart berry. We recognize them as the leaders of the berries, the first to bear fruit.

*Gifts exist in a realm of humility and mystery
— as with random acts of kindness, we do
not know their source.*

Strawberries first shaped my view of a world full of gifts simply scattered at your feet. A gift comes to you through no action of your own, free, having moved toward you without your beckoning. It is not a reward; you cannot earn it, or call it to you, or even deserve it. And yet it appears. Your only role is to be open-eyed and present. Gifts exist in a realm of humility and mystery — as with random acts of kindness, we do not know their source.

Those fields of my childhood showered us with strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, hickory nuts in the fall, bouquets of wildflowers brought to my mom, and family walks on Sunday

afternoon. They were our playground, retreat, wildlife sanctuary, ecology classroom, and the place where we learned to shoot tin cans off the stone wall. All for free. Or so I thought.

I experienced the world in that time as a gift economy, “goods and services” not purchased but received as gifts from the earth. Of course I was blissfully unaware of how my parents must have struggled to make ends meet in the wage economy raging far from this field.

In our family, the presents we gave one another were almost always homemade. I thought that was the definition of a gift: something you made for someone else. We made all our Christmas gifts: piggy banks from old Clorox bottles, hot pads from broken clothespins, and puppets from retired socks. My mother says it was because we had no money for store-bought presents. It didn't seem like a hardship to me; it was something special.

My father loves wild strawberries, so for Father's Day my mother would almost always make him strawberry shortcake. She baked the crusty shortcakes and whipped the heavy cream, but we kids were responsible for the berries. We each got an old jar or two and spent the Saturday before the celebration out in the fields, taking forever to fill them as more and more berries ended up in our mouths. Finally, we returned home and poured them out on the kitchen table to sort out the bugs. I'm sure we missed some, but Dad never mentioned the extra protein.

In fact, he thought wild strawberry shortcake was the best possible present, or so he had us convinced. It was a gift that could never be bought. As children raised by strawberries, we were probably unaware that the gift of berries was from the fields themselves, not from us. Our gift was time and attention and care and red-stained fingers. Heart berries, indeed.

Gifts from the earth or from each other establish a particular relationship, an obligation of sorts to give, to receive, and to reciprocate. The field gave to us, we gave to my dad, and we tried to give back to the strawberries. When the berry season was done, the plants would send out slender red runners to make new plants. Because I was fascinated by the way they would travel over the ground looking for good places to take root, I would weed out little patches of bare ground where the runners touched down. Sure enough, tiny little roots would emerge from the runner and by the end of the season there were even more plants, ready to bloom under the next Strawberry Moon. No person taught us this — the strawberries showed us. Because they had given us a gift, an ongoing relationship opened between us.

Farmers around us grew a lot of strawberries and frequently hired kids to pick for them. My siblings and I would ride our bikes a long way to Crandall's farm to pick berries to earn spending money. A dime for every quart we picked. But Mrs. Crandall was a persnickety overseer. She stood at the edge of the field in her bib apron and instructed us how to pick and warned us not to crush any berries. She had other rules, too. "These berries belong to me," she said, "not to you. I don't want to see you kids eating my

berries.” I knew the difference: In the fields behind my house, the berries belonged to themselves. At this lady’s roadside stand, she sold them for sixty cents a quart.

It was quite a lesson in economics. We’d have to spend most of our wages if we wanted to ride home with berries in our bike baskets. Of course those berries were ten times bigger than our wild ones, but not nearly so good. I don’t believe we ever put those farm berries in Dad’s shortcake. It wouldn’t have felt right.

It’s funny how the nature of an object — let’s say a strawberry or a pair of socks — is so changed by the way it has come into your hands, as a gift or as a commodity. The pair of wool socks that I buy at the store, red and gray striped, are warm and cozy. I might feel grateful for the sheep that made the wool and the worker who ran the knitting machine. I hope so. But I have no *inherent* obligation to those socks as a commodity, as private property. There is no bond beyond the politely exchanged “thank yous” with the clerk. I have paid for them and our reciprocity ended the minute I handed her the money. The exchange ends once parity has been established, an equal exchange. They become my property. I don’t write a thank-you note to JCPenney.

But what if those very same socks, red and gray striped, were knitted by my grandmother and given to me as a gift? That changes everything. A gift creates ongoing relationship. I will write a thank-you note. I will take good care of them and if I am a very gracious grandchild I’ll wear them when she visits even if I don’t like them. When it’s her birthday, I will surely make her a gift in

return. As the scholar and writer Lewis Hyde² notes, “It is the cardinal difference between gift and commodity exchange that a gift establishes a feeling-bond between two people.”

Wild strawberries fit the definition of gift, but grocery store berries do not. It’s the relationship between producer and consumer that changes everything. As a gift-thinker, I would be deeply offended if I saw wild strawberries in the grocery store. I would want to kidnap them all. They were not meant to be sold, only to be given. Hyde reminds us that in a gift economy, one’s freely given gifts cannot be made into someone else’s capital. I can see the headline now: “Woman Arrested for Shoplifting Produce. Strawberry Liberation Front Claims Responsibility.”

This is the same reason we do not sell sweetgrass. Because it is given to us, it should only be given to others. My dear friend Wally “Bear” Meshigaud is a ceremonial firekeeper for our people and uses a lot of sweetgrass on our behalf. There are folks who pick for him in a good way, to keep him supplied, but even so, at a big gathering sometimes he runs out. At powwows and fairs you can see our own people selling sweetgrass for ten bucks a braid. When Wally really needs *wiingashk* for a ceremony, he may visit one of those booths among the stalls selling frybread or hanks of beads. He introduces himself to the seller, explains his need, just as he would in a meadow, asking permission of the sweetgrass. He *cannot* pay for it, not because he doesn’t have the money, but because it cannot be bought or sold and still retain its essence for ceremony. He expects sellers to graciously give him what he needs, but sometimes they don’t. The guy at the booth thinks he’s

being shaken down by an elder. “Hey, you can’t get something for nothin’,” he says. But that is exactly the point. A gift *is* something for nothing, except that certain obligations are attached. For the plant to be sacred, it cannot be sold. Reluctant entrepreneurs will get a teaching from Wally, but they’ll never get his money.

Sweetgrass belongs to Mother Earth. Sweetgrass pickers collect properly and respectfully, for their own use and the needs of their community. They return a gift to the earth and tend to the well-being of the *wiingashk*. The braids are given as gifts, to honor, to say thank you, to heal and to strengthen. The sweetgrass is kept in motion. When Wally gives sweetgrass to the fire, it is a gift that has passed from hand to hand, growing richer as it is honored in every exchange.

That is the fundamental nature of gifts: they move, and their value increases with their passage. The fields made a gift of berries to us and we made a gift of them to our father. The more something is shared, the greater its value becomes. This is hard to grasp for societies steeped in notions of private property, where others are, by definition, excluded from sharing. Practices such as posting land against trespass, for example, are expected and accepted in a property economy but are unacceptable in an economy where land is seen as a gift to all.

The essence of the gift is that it creates a set of relationships. The currency of a gift

economy is, at its root, reciprocity.

Lewis Hyde wonderfully illustrates this dissonance in his exploration of the “Indian giver.” This expression, used negatively today as a pejorative for someone who gives something and then wants to have it back, actually derives from a fascinating cross-cultural misinterpretation between an indigenous culture operating in a gift economy and a colonial culture predicated on the concept of private property. When gifts were given to the settlers by the Native inhabitants, the recipients understood that they were valuable and were intended to be retained. Giving them away would have been an affront. But the indigenous people understood the value of the gift to be based in reciprocity and would be affronted if the gifts did not circulate back to them. Many of our ancient teachings counsel that whatever we have been given is supposed to be given away again.

From the viewpoint of a private property economy, the “gift” is deemed to be “free” because we obtain it free of charge, at no cost. But in the gift economy, gifts are not free. The essence of the gift is that it creates a set of relationships. The currency of a gift economy is, at its root, reciprocity. In Western thinking, private land is understood to be a “bundle of rights,” whereas in a gift economy property has a “bundle of responsibilities” attached.

I was once lucky enough to spend time doing ecological research in the Andes. My favorite part was market day in the local village, when the square filled with vendors. There were tables loaded

with *platanos*, carts of fresh papaya, stalls in bright colors with pyramids of tomatoes, and buckets of hairy yucca roots. Other vendors spread blankets on the ground, with everything you could need, from flip-flops to woven palm hats. Squatting behind her red blanket, a woman in a striped shawl and navy blue bowler spread out medicinal roots as beautifully wrinkled as she was. The colors, the smells of corn roasting on a wood fire and sharp limes, and the sounds of all the voices mingle wonderfully in my memory. I had a favorite stall where the owner, Edita, looked for me each day. She'd kindly explain how to cook unfamiliar items and pull out the sweetest pineapple she'd been saving under the table. Once she even had strawberries. I know that I paid the *gringa* prices but the experience of abundance and goodwill were worth every peso.

I dreamed not long ago of that market with all its vivid textures. I walked through the stalls with a basket over my arm as always and went right to Edita for a bunch of fresh cilantro. We chatted and laughed and when I held out my coins she waved them off, patting my arm and sending me away. A gift, she said. *Muchas gracias, señora*, I replied. There was my favorite *panadera*, with clean cloths laid over the round loaves. I chose a few rolls, opened my purse, and this vendor too gestured away my money as if I were impolite to suggest paying. I looked around in bewilderment; this was my familiar market and yet everything had changed. It wasn't just for me — no shopper was paying. I floated through the market with a sense of euphoria. Gratitude was the only currency accepted here. It was all a gift. It was like picking strawberries in my field: the merchants were just intermediaries passing on gifts from the earth.

I looked in my basket: two zucchinis, an onion, tomatoes, bread, and a bunch of cilantro. It was still half empty, but it felt full. I had everything I needed. I glanced over at the cheese stall, thinking to get some, but knowing it would be given, not sold, I decided I could do without. It's funny: Had all the things in the market merely been a very low price, I probably would have scooped up as much as I could. But when everything became a gift, I felt self-restraint. I didn't want to take too much. And I began thinking of what small presents I might bring to the vendors tomorrow.

The dream faded, of course, but the feelings first of euphoria and then of self-restraint remain. I've thought of it often and recognize now that I was witness there to the conversion of a market economy to a gift economy, from private goods to common wealth. And in that transformation the relationships became as nourishing as the food I was getting. Across the market stalls and blankets, warmth and compassion were changing hands. There was a shared celebration of abundance for all we'd been given. And since every market basket contained a meal, there was justice.

I'm a plant scientist and I want to be clear, but I am also a poet and the world speaks to me in metaphor. When I speak of the gift of berries, I do not mean that *Fragaria virginiana* has been up all night making a present just for me, strategizing to find exactly what I'd like on a summer morning. So far as we know, that does not happen, but as a scientist I am well aware of how little we do know. The plant has in fact been up all night assembling little packets of sugar and seeds and fragrance and color, because when it does so its evolutionary fitness is increased. When it is

successful in enticing an animal such as me to disperse its fruit, its genes for making yumminess are passed on to ensuing generations with a higher frequency than those of the plant whose berries were inferior. The berries made by the plant shape the behaviors of the dispersers and have adaptive consequences.

What I mean of course is that our human relationship with strawberries is transformed by our choice of perspective. It is human perception that makes the world a gift. When we view the world this way, strawberries and humans alike are transformed. The relationship of gratitude and reciprocity thus developed can increase the evolutionary fitness of both plant and animal. A species and a culture that treat the natural world with respect and reciprocity will surely pass on genes to ensuing generations with a higher frequency than the people who destroy it. The stories we choose to shape our behaviors have adaptive consequences.

Lewis Hyde has made extensive studies of gift economies. He finds that “objects ... will remain plentiful *because* they are treated as gifts.” A gift relationship with nature is a “formal give-and-take that acknowledges our participation in, and dependence upon, natural increase. We tend to respond to nature as a part of ourselves, not a stranger or alien available for exploitation. Gift exchange is the commerce of choice, for it is commerce that harmonizes with, or participates in, the process of [nature’s] increase.”

In the old times, when people’s lives were so directly tied to the land, it was easy to know the world as gift. When fall came, the

skies would darken with flocks of geese, honking “Here we are.” It reminds the people of the Creation story, when the geese came to save Sky woman. The people are hungry, winter is coming, and the geese fill the marshes with food. It is a gift and the people receive it with thanksgiving, love, and respect.

But when the food does not come from a flock in the sky, when you don’t feel the warm feathers cool in your hand and know that a life has been given for yours, when there is no gratitude in return — that food may not satisfy. It may leave the spirit hungry while the belly is full. Something is broken when the food comes on a Styrofoam tray wrapped in slippery plastic, a carcass of a being whose only chance at life was a cramped cage. That is not a gift of life; it is a theft.

How, in our modern world, can we find our way to understand the earth as a gift again, to make our relations with the world sacred again? I know we cannot all become hunter-gatherers — the living world could not bear our weight — but even in a market economy, can we behave “as if” the living world were a gift?

We could start by listening to Wally. There are those who will try to sell the gifts, but, as Wally says of sweetgrass for sale, “Don’t buy it.” Refusal to participate is a moral choice. Water is a gift for all, not meant to be bought and sold. Don’t buy it. When food has been wrenched from the earth, depleting the soil and poisoning our relatives in the name of higher yields, don’t buy it.

In material fact, Strawberries belong only to themselves. The exchange relationships we choose determine whether we share them as a common gift or sell them as a private commodity. A great deal rests on that choice. For the greater part of human history, and in places in the world today, common resources were the rule. But some invented a different story, a social construct in which everything is a commodity to be bought and sold. The market economy story has spread like wildfire, with uneven results for human well-being and devastation for the natural world. But it is just a story we have told ourselves and we are free to tell another, to reclaim the old one.

One of these stories sustains the living systems on which we depend. One of these stories opens the way to living in gratitude and amazement at the richness and generosity of the world. One of these stories asks us to bestow our own gifts in kind, to celebrate our kinship with the world. We can choose. If all the world is a commodity, how poor we grow. When all the world is a gift in motion, how wealthy we become.

In those childhood fields, waiting for strawberries to ripen, I used to eat the sour white ones, sometimes out of hunger but mostly from impatience. I knew the long-term results of my short-term greed, but I took them anyway. Fortunately, our capacity for self-restraint grows and develops like the berries beneath the leaves, so I learned to wait. A little. I remember lying on my back in the fields watching the clouds go by and rolling over to check the berries every few minutes. When I was young, I thought the change might happen that fast. Now I am old and I know that

transformation is slow. The commodity economy has been here on Turtle Island for four hundred years, eating up the white strawberries and everything else. But people have grown weary of the sour taste in their mouths. A great longing is upon us, to live again in a world made of gifts. I can scent it coming, like the fragrance of ripening strawberries rising on the breeze.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. How did strawberries affect Kimmerer in her childhood?
2. What is a strawberry moon? Why is it important?
3. Why in her childhood did Kimmerer experience the world as a “gift economy”?
4. Which economy, the gift or the market, has the most respect for ecology?
5. When did Kimmerer become aware of the market economy?
6. What obligations are attached to a gift?
7. What were the gifts the Kimmerers gave to each other?

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. The childhood experiences of Robin Kimmerer shaped her entire attitude toward the nature of economics. As a person with indigenous roots, she saw the idea of a gift economy as normal. In an essay that examines your own environment as a child, explain how your surroundings and family traditions shaped your views of economics. Did you have a similar understanding of a gift economy, or was your experience entirely based on a market economy? Were your childhood experiences as formative to you as Kimmerer’s were to her?

2. Private property rights are central to a market economy. Kimmerer's characterization of indigenous people's views that land, for example, belonged to everyone, conflicts with that idea. Private property is said to be a sacred right in the constitution of the United States, and we regard it as the norm of any modern economy. Explain why the concept of private property is essential to people living in a democratic nation. Analyze your own attitudes toward the value of private property, beginning with your earliest awareness that property could belong to you and only to you. Could you be happy in a community in which the concept of private property is abandoned? How do you think your views on life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are shaped by your commitment to the concept of private property?
3. It is clear that the gift economy is much preferable to Kimmerer than the prevailing market economy. Yet, it is also clear that such an economy would not work in our modern world. Why would it be important for us to examine the idea of a gift economy if it does not work? What can we as a community learn from the idea of a gift economy that can be applied to our own larger economy? Kimmerer talks about "natural increase" and "not exploitation" ([para. 30](#)) as virtues of a gift economy. How important are those ideas for citizens today?
4. One idea Kimmerer touches on is commodification. She speaks about commodifying free things, such as water. The strawberries she got free as a child have been commodified. Today our own personal data are commodified online. Write an essay in which you define commodification and examine examples of commodification that you feel are obnoxious, dangerous, or simply offensive. Why would anyone complain about commodification? Is it true that our economy is based on commodification?
5. After doing research, write an essay explaining who the Potawatomi Indians were historically and what their situation is currently. What are their current tribal issues, and what in their history points to the kind of values that Kimmerer seems to consider important? What do you learn about their main concerns and their attitudes toward

economics? What in their creation myths do you find applicable to the feelings and concerns that Kimmerer emphasizes in her essay?

6. What is the lesson Kimmerer learned from her experience working for Mrs. Crandall on the Crandall Farm? If you have had experiences working as a young person, explain what kind of feelings Kimmerer may have had when being confronted by her employer. What were Mrs. Crandall's assumptions about the kind of market economy that she was operating in? Who in this interchange is being more realistic in her attitude? Why would Kimmerer expect any different attitude on the part of Mrs. Crandall? Kimmerer's portrayal of Mrs. Crandall makes her seem unlikeable, if not a villain. Is her portrayal fair?

CONNECTIONS

1. Andrew Carnegie in "[The Gospel of Wealth](#)" has a different approach to economics, particularly in relation to the practices of indigenous Americans. How would Kimmerer critique Carnegie's theories about wealth and about the ways in which wealth should be distributed? To what extent could you defend Carnegie on the basis of his gifts to the people of America? Is it possible that he, too, is practicing a gift economy, albeit quite different from what Kimmerer describes? Research Carnegie's philanthropy and write a convincing essay defending your views.
2. One of Kimmerer's concerns is with conservation. She feels that when people lived close to the land, as did her Potawatomi ancestors, the gift economy promoted natural increase rather than exploitation and despoliation. Rachel Carson's essay, "[The Obligation to Endure](#)", seems to echo some of her concerns. In a comparative essay, demonstrate the extent to which Carson's essay reinforces the values that Kimmerer expresses. Be specific and detailed, and also explain the extent to which these two writers differ in both their style of writing and their chief concerns.
3. Like Kimmerer, Karl Marx also challenged prevailing economic ideas about the relationship between capital and labor. Consider the arguments both Kimmerer and Marx make about the role of the

worker. What assumptions do their arguments share, and where do they diverge? What might Marx have thought of a gift economy? To what extent would he have seen it as compatible with his vision of communism?



Dambisa Moyo *Economic Growth Matters to Ordinary People*



David Levenson/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images

DAMBISA MOYO (b. 1969) was born in Zambia and studied in the University of Zambia, where her parents had studied and met. Her parents moved to the United States to work and teach for eight years while her father earned his Ph.D. at the University of California at Los Angeles, after which they returned to Zambia.

However, during a period of instability in Zambia, Moyo, like her father, came to the United States on a scholarship to American University, in Washington, where she took an undergraduate degree in chemistry. After staying to earn her masters degree in business, she worked at the World Bank for two years before going to Harvard for a masters degree in public administration. She then worked for Goldman Sachs, a global investment bank, after which she left the United States to study at Oxford University for her doctorate in economics, which she received in 2002. Since then, Moyo has written several major books about economic development both in the United States and abroad. She is on the board of numerous companies, such as Barclay's Bank, Chevron, and 3M. She has been described as a democratic capitalist and has directed her attention to subjects as varied as aid to underdeveloped nations, especially in Africa, as well as the tension between democracy and autocracy in China.

Moyo has written four books, all of which have been widely reviewed in the media and have been *New York Times* best sellers. Much of her work is controversial in part because she has a unique perspective from which to address the economic issues of our time. Her first book, *Dead Aid* (2009), alarmed many aid groups because Moyo said that most of the aid given to nations in Africa had done little more than to increase their dependence on aid. In her book, she proposed instead that development focus on stimulating businesses in Africa to produce the kind of economic growth that she argues will bring people out of poverty. She offers a brief history of aid in Africa and concludes that it is "The silent killer of growth." She then tries to argue for programs that will use

foreign capital investment to make development happen. When the book was published, Bill Gates, whose own foundation provides substantial aid to various development and public health projects in Africa, condemned *Dead Aid* and indirectly attacked Moyo. In part due to this controversy, the book attracted attention outside economic circles and made Moyo a figure that *Time Magazine* named as one of the hundred most influential people in the world.

How the West Was Lost (2011), Moyo's second book, begins with a stark observation, that in 2008 the Chrysler Building, "one of the best-loved icons of the New York skyline," was purchased by a group of Middle Eastern investors who spent almost two billion dollars for American real estate in the first six months of that year. Moyo sees this as a sign that the West is on the verge of losing its economic, military, and political supremacy. The East, as she says in her book, was the leading economic power in the world for many centuries before the late-eighteenth-century industrialization of the West. Following industrialization, that economic power shifted to the West, but, Moyo argues, this shift is now reversing itself. She blames many economic missteps for the massive debt that the West has built up since the end of World War II.

Individuals have gone into debt in order to purchase things of little value, and China has encouraged that debt. Moyo sees three main reasons for the continued decline of the West. First, the United States has alienated most of the emerging nations with whom it must compete, particularly China and the Middle East. Second, the globalization of trade, which has lowered the cost of transport and made technology available everywhere, has eroded

the United States's technological advantage. The third point is Moyo's sense that the West has wasted its capital and is wasting its labor. Essentially, she argues against a service economy that rewards entertainment at the expense of significant social services, such as education and health. She ends her book by pointing to possible remedies that, if applied in time, could change what she otherwise sees as inevitable.

Winner Take All: China's Race for Resources and What It Means for the Rest of the World (2011), Moyo's third book, centers on China's race to control dwindling resources. The rise of the world's population makes arable land and water resources more and more scarce. In one generation China has raised 300 million people out of poverty and is aiming to raise even more out of poverty in the next generation. Moyo explores the ramifications of this, looking at how cell phones alone account for the expanded use of several of the rarest metals that China aims to control, how China has been purchasing land in foreign nations as a way of raising food for its own people, and how it has been stockpiling minerals, rerouting rivers, and building oil reserves in anticipation of a growing worldwide demand.

Moyo's fourth book, *Edge of Chaos: Why Democracy Is Failing to Deliver Economic Growth — and How to Fix It*, was published in 2018. "Economic Growth Matters to Ordinary People" is excerpted from this book, which examines the ways in which economic growth prospers in democracies such as the United States as opposed to the way it prospers in state-controlled economies such as China. Moyo centers on the economic realities that produced

the Great Recession of 2008, and how its effects are still felt. In her final analysis, she writes that despite her studies in economics and her commitment to financial principles, “politics, and not economics, will be the key driver of human progress and prosperity in years to come.”¹

Democracies produce inequality in wealth, but that can be addressed by legislation. Slow growth is also possible in a democracy, but Moyo contends that slow growth and income inequality together are a threat to democracy. Her chief complaint is that legislators today focus on the short term — getting re-elected, protecting their turf — and not enough on long-term goals of improving infrastructure and eliminating debt. In order to strengthen democracy, Moyo recommends longer terms for legislators, the elimination of gerrymandering, and mandatory voting for citizens. She also recommends that informed and well-educated voters should be counted more heavily than others. She argues fiercely against protectionism and praises globalism, but in a form that is more open than how it has been practiced. She fears that if democracy is not reformed it will cease to be relevant and autocratic systems such as China’s will prevail.

MOYO’S RHETORIC

The first paragraph is marked by a number of declarative sentences, starting with the title of her selection: “Growth matters — powerfully — to ordinary people.” Obviously, this is a thesis statement that needs development and defense. The beginning of the second paragraph, “Economic growth is about satisfying the

most basic of individual human needs,” establishes exactly what she is talking about. This is a powerful way to begin an essay.

Contrasting two versions of economics is a characteristic of Moyo’s writing. In the second paragraph she talks about the micro level of economics, which affects the individual, and compares it to the macro level, which affects the community. This use of opposing views is carried through the entirety of the selection, as later she contrasts economic success with a lack of success, growth with contraction, and the rights of government with the rights of the individual. Enumeration is also one of Moyo’s important organizing principles, beginning when she says growth enhances living standards in three ways ([para. 5](#)), first in helping the individual improve their livelihood; second, in helping the individual have a positive effect on the community; third, in allowing the society to be politically stable ([para. 10](#)).

Another of Moyo’s most important rhetorical strategies is to make a declaration about an important aspect of her argument and then to follow it immediately with a relevant example. In [paragraph 3](#), Moyo talks about how deteriorating economic growth helped to cause the French Revolution in 1789, which began with rioting in response to tax hikes and food shortage. She follows this example in the next paragraph with Greece, a modern example, which suffered rioting in 2010 that led to a major shift in its government. Later, in [paragraph 7](#), Moyo uses Gary, Indiana, which has suffered profoundly from an economic contraction and has reduced services to the community while also damaging the

quality of life of its citizens, as a memorable modern example of deteriorating economic growth.

Late in the selection she moves to definition as she considers how to define growth, although she admits that economists are primarily concerned with the function of three factors related to growth: capital, labor, and constraints including laws, technology, and regulations. In order to define growth she seeks to define these components and their relationship to each other. She then focuses on labor as it relates to growth. Labor, she points out, needs to be measured in terms of how much is available and what its quality is. This recalls an earlier point in the essay, where Moyo argues that restricting the immigration of highly qualified labor will hurt the United States economy.

Moyo also explores the important issues facing growth. In [paragraph 16](#) she talks about the limits of what economic growth can do. For example, in terms of producing a stable society, growth will not stop an ideologue from terrorist activities. Moreover, economic growth will not necessarily change the income inequalities that have plagued our democracy since the 1960s. When growth is considerable, those who possess capital, such as people who invest their money in the stock market, will gain much more than individuals who depend on wages for their own capital. She does not propose in this selection any cure for such inequality, and she admits that economic growth alone is no panacea. This implies, then, that some kind of progressive tax structure would be necessary for maintaining some kind of economic balance.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Dambisa Moyo's "Economic Growth Matters to Ordinary People." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. How does economic growth affect the individual?
2. What is the result of economic contraction?
3. Growth is a function of what three key factors?

Economic Growth Matters to Ordinary People

Growth matters — powerfully — to ordinary people. When economic growth wanes, everyone suffers. Stagnation exacerbates numerous social, health, environmental, and political problems. The very essence of culture, community, and people's individual expectations about the kinds of lives they can lead become dimmer, coarser, and smaller in the absence of growth.

Economic growth is about satisfying the most basic of individual human needs. On the micro level, for the individual, the accumulation of money itself is pointless unless one uses it to improve one's own station or else improve society in general. Likewise, economic growth at the macro level should translate to improvements in access to and quality of such basic needs as food, shelter, security, and health care. Stagnation at either level means these individual and societal needs go unfulfilled, often with dire results.

The linkages among deteriorating economic growth, worsening living standards, and increasing poverty and instability are well established. A classic historical example is the 1789 French Revolution, which was touched off by rioting prompted by a decade of deteriorating living conditions, including tax hikes and food shortages. The lack of progress and ensuing economic crisis ultimately led to a political revolution.

In the present day, Greece has experienced a similar pattern. Between 2008 and 2016, the Greek economy contracted by 45 percent in GDP terms,² leading to a concomitant rise in poverty. Job losses, wage cuts, and reductions in workers' compensation and social benefits all led to Greek households becoming on average 40 percent poorer. By 2014, disposable household income had sunk to below 2003 levels. Major riots in 2010, with over a hundred thousand people marching in Athens, culminated in the election of a new far left government led by the Syriza Party³ in 2015.

Growth enhances the living standards of both individuals and society as a whole in three main ways. First and most straightforwardly, growth offers the individual an opportunity to improve their own livelihood. For example, a worker who earns a bonus or extra income can use that money to obtain better health care, education, transportation, and food. Because of the growth in their income, they are able to secure goods and services that enhance their life. Conversely, if an individual loses their job or receives a reduced income, they can be forced to cut back on health care, food, and education. Growth can make an individual's life better or worse in this simple way.

Second, growth in income can allow an individual to have an impact on the wider community. They can hire others or invest their windfall. Through everyday purchases, the individual has the opportunity to support other businesses and individuals, and help others increase their own standards of living. By investing or making their capital available to be borrowed, they enable others

to grow their incomes, improve their lives, and better society. Many small and medium enterprises in particular rely heavily on this type of individual investment. Given that over 90 percent of businesses in the OECD⁴ are small and medium-sized enterprises of fewer than 250 employees (and 60-70 percent of employment), and that in developed countries a large percentage of a nation's overall economic growth comes from such companies, an individual's investments can meaningfully affect the economy.

Conversely, the absence of growth in the wider community can have a profound effect on the individual. Economic contraction can foster political and social unrest and a breakdown in social cohesion. The town of Gary, Indiana, symbolizes this kind of industrial decline. Once a thriving steel town, it has seen its population tumble to less than 80,000 from 180,000 in the 1960s. The town's steelworks employed 5,000 people in 2015, a fraction of the 30,000 who worked there forty years earlier. Gary has a poverty rate of 38 percent, high crime, and poor levels of education attainment. The lack of growth in the city's overall economy has had meaningful negative effects on individual quality of life.

The relationship between growth in income and human progress (or conversely between a growth slump and a reduction in living standards) is explained by the multiplier effect. Additional income earned by an individual will be transmitted across the economy in multiples of its original value. This theory was originally devised by the British economist John Maynard Keynes⁵ to show that increases in government spending would result in increased

income for the population. However, the original source of new capital need not be the government.

Say that a factory worker receives a \$2,000 bonus after a successful year and that he spends it all in a lump sum. When he does so, perhaps on upgrading his home, the \$2,000 becomes the income of multiple traders in his town, who in turn go on to spend it elsewhere. The worker's \$2,000 can quickly become \$3,000, or \$4,000, and so forth. In essence, the \$2,000 enables not just one transaction (the original payment to the general contractor), but many subsequent ones, so that rather than being saved, the money is spent.

Growth allows society to sustain itself and to ensure accountability, but in the absence of growth, society weakens.

There is a third, more complex way that growth can enhance (or by its absence diminish) the quality of life: through its role in preserving transparent political structures. Personal rights and freedoms can only exist if a society is able to hold government accountable. Growth allows society to sustain itself and to ensure accountability, but in the absence of growth, society weakens. In this way, economic stress creates the conditions for political upheaval and, at the extreme, the breakdown of liberal democratic institutions.

Germany in the 1920s and 1930s offers the classic example of this sort of breakdown. Germany faced an enormous reparations bill from the First World War, high levels of debt, hyperinflation, surging unemployment, and the 1929 cratering of world financial markets. The country's subsequent economic collapse enabled the rise of Nazi extremism. More recently, in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, Spain's economy faced a growth contraction of approximately 6 percent, while unemployment soared to 26 percent by 2013. Amid these conditions, momentum grew for the breakup of the country through Catalanian independence.⁶ The clamor for Catalanian secession has intensified since the end of the financial crisis and aggravated ill feelings among Catalans, who are concerned that they are being forced to pay more into Spain's coffers than they should. An unofficial poll held by the Catalanian regional government in 2014 revealed that 80 percent of voters backed independence. The breakaway of Catalonia from Spain would be costly, as the region contributes 19 percent to Spain's GDP, produces 45 percent of Spain's high-tech exports, and is the gateway for 70 percent of the country's exports. The consequences of a Catalanian secession for government revenue, jobs, and the broader Spanish economy would be considerable.

When growth is strong, it sets in motion a virtuous cycle of economic opportunity, upward mobility, and rising standards of living. Without it, society contracts and atrophies in ways evident not merely in economic indices but more meaningfully in the lived experiences of people and their communities. Although growth alone cannot end disease pandemics, address environmental and climate concerns, improve educational outcomes, or blunt the

threat of radicalized terrorism, without growth solving these problems becomes much harder.

How does economic growth help in resolving these seemingly intractable challenges? First, it enables a government to fund and enhance public goods — education, health care, national security, and physical infrastructure. In a climate of rising economic growth, governments (and businesses through increased sales and revenues) gain marginal dollars that they can earmark for these purposes. Without economic growth, governments are forced to reduce resources in one area in order to fund budgetary needs in another.

Second, strong economic success is a precursor to private investment and innovation that act as a springboard for improved living standards and progress. Economic growth helped drive US living standards throughout the twentieth century. Incomes rose thirty times, and hundreds of thousands of Americans were moved out of poverty. In a similar vein, China's legendary economic expansion consisted of double-digit growth rates over three decades, helping move over three hundred million Chinese out of indigence.

Without economic growth, the public purse faces reduced tax revenues and is unable to fund and deliver on basic human needs in the form of public goods. Essentially, a lack of success is a precursor of worsening living conditions and unrest. In periods of collapsing growth — the 2008 financial crisis is a stark example — all manner and marks of human progress, including real wages,

job opportunities, life expectancy, and social mobility, suffer. A lack of economic success does far more than just diminish living standards; it promotes disaffected and destitute populations. While economic failure fuels destabilizing angst, strong economic progress should dissuade radicalization and rebellion.

Certainly there are limits to what growth can do. It is inescapably true that certain phenomena are immune to being solved by growth. Even if economic growth can meaningfully undermine the ability to recruit for extremist movements, there will always be ideologues immune to any economic success. Terrorism thus represents one phenomenon beyond the reach of growth alone. Economic improvement can ameliorate the situation but not eradicate it in its entirety. Likewise, economic growth alone cannot solve income inequality. After all, we have seen countries where income inequality worsens even as they grow. Growth can even become a problem in its own right, as poorly managed economic growth spurts can leave a damaging legacy of debt and inflation. Economic growth alone is no panacea, but without it long-term societal progress is impossible.

Quite clearly economic growth is utterly vital to the survival, success, and stability of a nation. The challenge of economics since its inception has been to pinpoint the key elements of growth and to navigate the maze of individuals and businesses to determine how these contribute to real, sustained growth. Before delving into the measurement of economic growth, it is important to understand the engines of growth. To that end, it is worth

examining what drives growth and considering how best growth should be measured.

Viewed through the prism of economics, growth is a function of three key factors: capital (how much money an economy has, minus deficits and debts); labor (measureable in terms of both quality and quantity); and total factor productivity (a catchall of other factors that affect economic growth beyond capital and labor, including innovation, technology, political systems, laws, and regulations).

Productivity is thought to account for more than 50 percent of why one country grows and another does not. Transparent and reliable laws, clearly defined property rights, and advances in technology all contribute to higher productivity and thus catalyze economic growth. Drags on productivity, such as debt and demographics, can limit growth. In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, many developed countries have suffered under the weight of mounting debts and deficits. Demographic shifts have also proven taxing, as they have taken the form of a decline in the working-age, economically active population and a rise in an aging, economically inactive, increasingly expensive population. Subsequent chapters will analyze these factors in greater detail, but for now, suffice it to say that these levers act to dampen economic growth.

Evaluating the true health of an economy is complex. The presence of debt can complicate the picture. A neighbor who appears to be wealthy with a large house and new car might just

as easily be heavily in debt, one unexpected bill away from bankruptcy, as he might be debt free, but neither scenario is obvious to the naked eye. At the macroeconomic level of an economy, debt similarly complicates the growth picture. As we shall examine in detail, debt can have deleterious effects on economic growth.

To be sure, high-level growth statistics can be misleading. Over the past three decades, aggregate growth numbers in the United States (and elsewhere) increased, suggesting that living standards were increasing. However, these growth gains accrued more to the owners of capital rather than to the ordinary working populace who depend on labor for their income. This disparity can be seen in a comparison between capital's record returns — between 1970 and 2017 the Dow Jones stock index has risen by more than 4.5 times in value, and S&P 500 annual average real returns have been around 8.7 percent — and the performance of real wages, which have flatlined over the same period. Moreover, the American worker has found himself much more in hock to lenders, having amassed burdensome debt in mortgages and student and car loans, further eroding his living standards. The split between gains to capital holders and losses to labor providers is echoed in the 2016 US electoral map. It is no coincidence that the two states New York and California that are home to the great pools of American capital, Wall Street, Hollywood, and Silicon Valley, saw voters heavily endorse the status quo, whereas the voters in America's industrial heartland overwhelmingly voted for change.

Evaluating growth on the scale of a national economy, or globally, is complex. Before we can trace the engines of growth, along with the most common barriers to it, we must go back to the beginning to understand how economists calculate the wealth of nations in the first place.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. How does an individual's extra income affect the community?
2. In what way is Greece's recent economic contraction a lesson for democracies?
3. What is the multiplier effect?
4. How does an individual invest in the community?
5. How does economic success act as a springboard?
6. What is the effect of debt on economic growth?
7. What seems to be the relation of capital to labor?

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

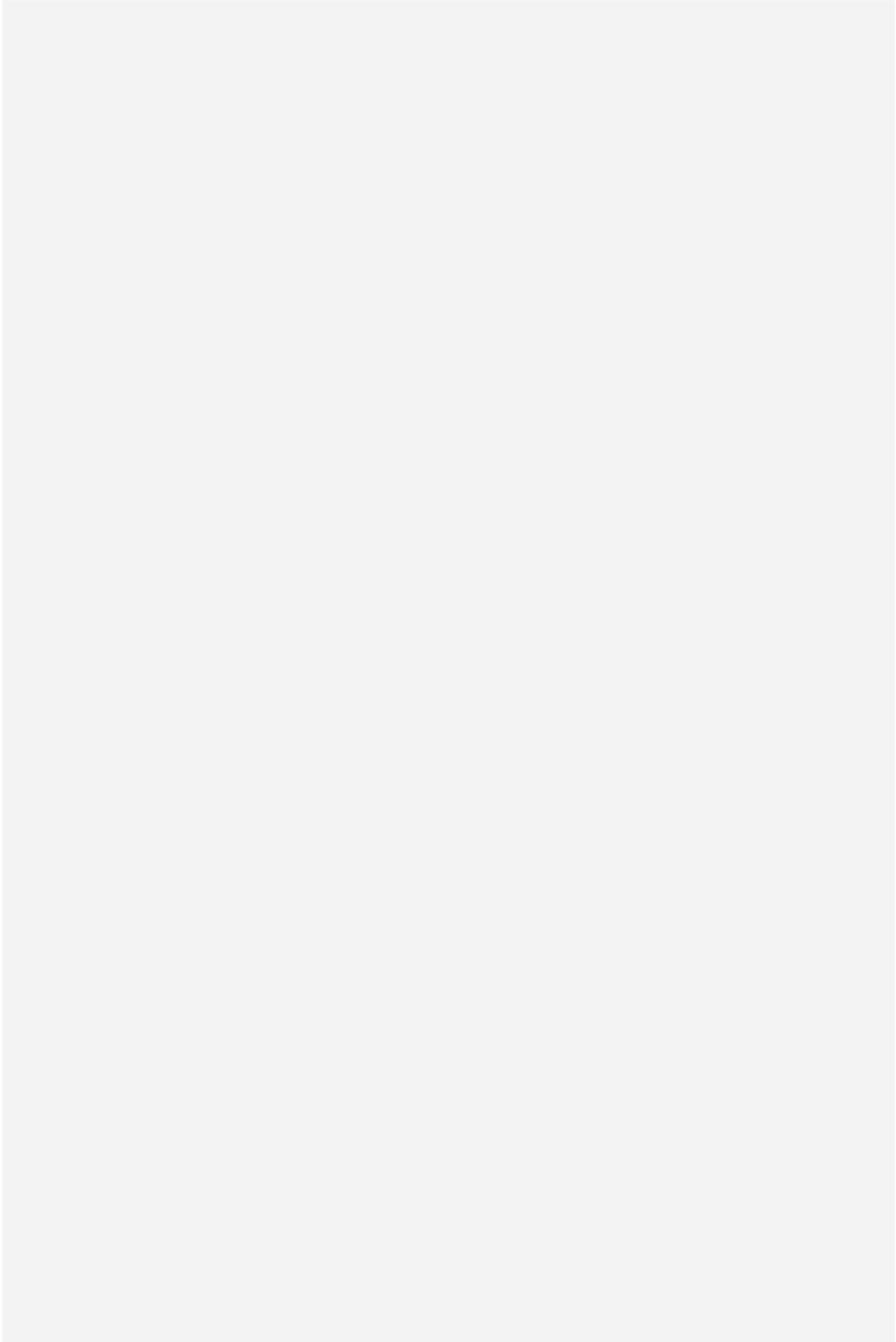
1. Research the circumstances of the crisis in Greece between 2008 and 2016. Newspapers and magazines covered the story in detail in that period. Moyo warns of the effects of debt on economic growth, and it is clear that one of Greece's main problems was that it had taken on massive debt. In an essay, explain what the issues were in Greece's economic crisis. How did individuals have to change their lifestyle during the crisis? What were the political repercussions? What can the United States learn from Greece's experience?
2. Private property rights are central to a capitalist economy. What does Moyo say about property rights? To what extent does a functional democracy depend on the guarantee of property rights? The

constitution of the United States places great emphasis on the rights of individuals to own property. Why would a growth economy help to guarantee property rights for individuals? Must a democratic government guarantee property rights for the individual?

3. In [paragraph 6](#) Moyo makes the point that the growth in income of the individual will benefit the entire society because the individual, with more money, can spend for goods and services that enrich others, who in turn will spend more money. This is to some extent the multiplier effect mentioned in [paragraph 8](#). Use an example from your own experience, or from your parents' experience or that of friends. How does the multiplier effect work? One issue Moyo does not address is personal savings. If, instead of spending a bonus, you save it, are you helping the community or harming it? How can an individual's savings help a community?
4. Research Gary, Indiana, or a similar city and explain what has happened to that community as a result of economic contraction. If you have personal experience of such a city or community, use examples to make your reader understand the significance of the circumstances that affect such cities. There are many such cities in America: Detroit, Michigan; Flint, Michigan; Buffalo, New York; and Cleveland, Ohio are a few of the larger cities. Is it the responsibility of the federal government to assist these cities? Argue your case in an essay with examples. Use enumeration where applicable.
5. If you live in a community that seems to be enjoying economic growth, write an essay that explains what constitutes its growth. Refer to [paragraph 18](#) for a guide as to what factors seem to drive growth. The main two factors are capital and labor. Comment on the kind of investments that are apparent in your community — such as employers and institutions that invest in the community. Then examine the kinds of laborers you observe working in local businesses. Consult your town hall to find out what data they have on capital and labor. In addition factor in the region and its economic advantages as well as the taxes and how they are applied. What regulations or absence of them encourage growth?

CONNECTIONS

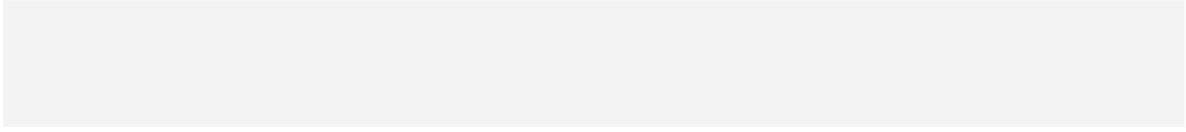
1. Dambisa Moyo was given the Hayek Lifetime Achievement Award in 2013. Research the Hayek award to determine what it recognizes as significant work in economics and find out what Moyo said in her acceptance speech, which can be viewed online. Then consult F.A. Hayek's "[Economic Control and Totalitarianism](#)". What are the points of agreement between Moyo and Hayek? Moyo knows Hayek's work, so one question you might deal with in an essay is how much Moyo agrees with Hayek. Do her views on any important economic principles differ from Hayek's? In what ways?
2. How would Moyo be likely to respond to the labor issues that both Robert Reich and Barbara Ehrenreich describe in their essays? Moyo never talks about the middle class or about the minimum wage, yet they both factor into any discussion of economic growth. What would Moyo say about wages and economic growth? How would she criticize Ehrenreich's essay in terms of its attitude toward capitalism? Does Ehrenreich have as much faith in the power of capitalism to produce a good life for the individual as Moyo does? Why are their views so different? How does each author use examples to bolster their positions?



Reflections on the Nature of Wealth

Now that you have read the selections in “Wealth,” consider how these writers have helped further inform your views on wealth.

1. Why is it important for the individual to support a growing economy?
2. How do you define the middle class now that you have read these authors?
3. Does great wealth in the hands of the few make it impossible for there to be a healthy middle class?
4. Should government take a role in redistributing wealth? How?
5. Do you agree with Andrew Carnegie that the government should have a graduated income tax? Is such a tax fair?
6. Should the federal government move to guarantee a living minimum wage?
7. To what extent do you feel that democracy is threatened by financial inequality?
8. How much do you see yourself defined by identity politics rather than by class distinctions?
9. What, for you, would constitute a fair distribution of wealth in a healthy democracy?
10. Are democratic socialism and democratic capitalism totally incompatible?



Part Four EDUCATION

MICHEL EYQUEM DE MONTAIGNE

MARIA MONTESSORI

DIANE RAVITCH

MARILYNNE ROBINSON

HOWARD GARDNER

MARTHA NUSSBAUM

BELL HOOKS

Introduction

Knowledge without education is but armed injustice.

—HORACE (65–8 B.C.E.)

The ink of the scholar is more sacred than the blood of the martyr.

—MUHAMMAD (570–632)

You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him to find it within himself.

—GALILEO GALILEI (1564–1642)

There is less flogging in our great schools than formerly — but then less is learned there; so what the boys get at one end they lose at the other.

—SAMUEL JOHNSON (1709–1784)

In large states public education will always be mediocre, for the same reason that in large kitchens the cooking is usually bad.

—FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE (1844–1900)

The educator must above all understand how to wait; to reckon all effects in the light of the future, not of the present.

—ELLEN KEY (1849–1926)

An empty head is not really empty; it is stuffed with rubbish. Hence the difficulty of forcing anything into an empty head.

—ERIC HOFFER (1898–1983)

Education is not to reform students or amuse them or to make them expert technicians. It is to unsettle their minds, widen their horizons, inflame their intellects, teach them to think straight, if possible.

—ROBERT MAYNARD HUTCHINS (1899–1977)

Education makes machines which act like men and produces men who act like machines.

—ERICH FROMM (1900–1980)

The school system, custodian of print culture, has no place for the rugged individual. It is indeed the homogenizing hopper into which we toss our integral tots for processing.

—MARSHALL MCLUHAN (1911–1980)

In classical times, when education was largely conducted at home or in schools that served the privileged few, education was rarely a matter of general philosophical discussion. In ancient Rome, the schools taught Greek literature and modeled themselves on Greek schools. In medieval Arab societies, madrasas and early universities maintained the traditions of the Platonic Greek academies until late in the Renaissance. Although the texts of Plato and Aristotle were lost to Europe during the Middle Ages, they were rediscovered through connections to these Islamic societies where they had been preserved. However, in all these cases education was reserved for the privileged classes. The average person learned what was needed on the job and often could not read or write.

Among the early writings on education in the Western tradition is John Milton's *Of Education* (1644), written as a public letter to Samuel Hartlib, who had written on education after having been influenced by Johann Comenius, a religious reformer in Europe. Milton was himself a schoolmaster for a few years, primarily teaching his sister's children. One of his famous statements concerns the learning of Latin and Greek, which was expected of all schoolchildren: "We do amiss to spend seven or eight years merely in scraping together so much miserable Latin and Greek

as might be learned otherwise easily and delightfully in one year.” Milton may have been a good teacher, but it is clear that he was working with a very select kind of student.

However, in the seventeenth century, even as Milton was writing, things were changing. For example, in America the Puritans declared in 1642 that every boy who did not train for a trade must go to school. In the United States, the tradition of public schooling began in 1635 in Massachusetts and spread to the rest of the nation. The first schools were grammar schools in which Latin was usually emphasized. Most of these schools were for boys only; girls went to private “dame” schools conducted by women in their own homes. Public high schools were not created in the United States until 1821. On the other hand, a grammar school education was quite extensive and would in some cases prepare students for college study. The earliest college in the United States was Harvard, founded in 1639. Harvard’s initial purpose was to train ministers for the church, but it rapidly expanded to include more secular studies.

Universal education was the law in the United States in the early part of the nineteenth century, and other nations soon followed with modifications. Theoreticians of education developed a number of views on how to educate the masses. Education remains an essential topic today for politicians, educators, and citizens. The selections that comprise this part represent an international group of well-known educators and writers, all of whom had a personal stake in the success or failure of education

in their time. They also understood the political implications of widespread free public education.

Montaigne, a prominent gentleman of the Renaissance in France, addressed his essay “Of the Education of Children” to a countess pregnant with her first child. His advice concerns the education of an aristocrat, but his views encompass all young children who would have the opportunity of an education in his day. His views, which are surprisingly modern, include the warning that students should not take everything on authority, but that they should be curious and skeptical about what they read and learn until their own experiences confirm the truth. Montaigne is as worried about the child’s character as the child’s learning and states on multiple occasions that he is interested in producing a virtuous and well-rounded child rather than a merely bookish individual.

Another influential educator, Maria Montessori, devoted her life to the education of the young, with an emphasis on preschool children. She was a physician, anthropologist, professor, and sociologist. Her great experiment in education took place in the worst slum in Rome at the turn of the twentieth century. While the slum was being torn down and rebuilt with modern buildings, she was given the opportunity to build a school that would accommodate the neighborhood’s youngest children. In opposition to the norms of the time, Montessori used what she called “scientific pedagogy” to help students find themselves and make discoveries about the world in an environment designed for learning. The results of her experiment were far more impressive than anyone could have expected. In this school for impoverished

students, she had three- and four-year-old children learning to read and write. Children were excited by opportunities to learn about science and mathematics. Her approach to teaching, known as the Montessori method, was introduced in a number of Italian cities. Eventually Montessori traveled the world training teachers to use her methods and establish Montessori schools. These schools still flourish today, their principles based on the successes Montessori achieved beginning in 1906.

A historian of education, Diane Ravitch has written several books that argue for education that is centered on the needs of the student. She has been assistant secretary for education in George H. W. Bush's administration and has influenced the Common Core curriculum, which she currently opposes because the emphasis on testing and pretesting takes too much time away from the arts and music as well as from physical education. Now a research professor at New York University, she is a strong proponent for the public schools, which she considers to be under siege. She does not favor charter schools or funding for religious schools because such programs siphon money from public funds designated for public education. In describing the essentials of a good education, she demands an approach that includes time for history, writing, arts, and literature, and less time for testing.

The celebrated novelist and essayist Marilynne Robinson, in a talk given to English teachers in Great Britain, defends the humanities and a liberal arts education. She begins as a historian by reminding her audience that the Medieval period was succeeded by the Renaissance, beginning roughly in 1500 when the great

texts of the Greeks and Romans were recovered and translated into European languages and the major European universities were founded. The point that she makes is that the flourishing of European society was built on a liberal education. The wealth and grandeur of the Renaissance led to the industrial ages that followed, and owed their stability and success to the humane education received by generations. In light of that extraordinary six hundred year success, Robinson finds it illogical that the humanities should be disregarded in modern education. She encourages her audience to defend the basis of liberal education.

Howard Gardner is interested in education as it relates to intelligence, which he approaches from a pluralist point of view. His idea of seven distinct intelligences, as opposed to the conventional views represented by standardized IQ tests or the Common Core testing in math and reading, is at once traditional and revolutionary. In drawing on the model of ancient Greek education, he urges us to examine the virtues of all seven forms of intelligence and not rely on the logical-mathematical model that dominates contemporary education. Gardner notes that certain forms of intelligence are culturally linked, but he leaves open the question of whether they are gender-linked.

Martha Nussbaum is a philosopher whose work covers many different subjects and contemporary issues. However, she is best known as a classicist, with important books that examine the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and other Greek philosophers. She teaches at the University of Chicago and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Her interest in

“Education for Democracy” is to examine the current approaches taken in American schools to prepare students for life after school. Nussbaum sees the purpose of education in the first decades of the nineteenth century as preparation for citizenship. Her fear for the present is that the political emphasis on global competition has moved education toward the goal of producing obedient, skilled workers useful for economic growth. But that process, she argues, damages the prospects of preparing citizens who value and defend democracy.

Moving in another direction, bell hooks centers her attention on the education of women to understand the premises of the feminist movement. She discusses the women’s studies program in which she teaches and addresses the question of who feminists must hope to reach in the public forum. Because so many popular feminists are well educated and some are academics, hooks fears that they will forget that many women who need to hear them are illiterate or close to illiterate. As a result, the written material that they have relied upon for years cannot do them any good. hooks argues that the divide between the well-educated and less educated has produced a backlash of anti-intellectualism, which she feels undermines feminism. She argues for better communication and for educational techniques that reach students as well as women at large.

These authors demonstrate a range of interests. The early commentators are devoted to the student-centered approach to education. Meeting students on their level and helping to develop natural talents is a major concern. Many of these thinkers are also

interested in determining what the most important studies are and which ones benefit most children. More modern commentators respond to contemporary fears, including that education programs are too narrow and specialized, which they claim has serious effects on the health of the nation. The disregard of the humanities in many institutions is seen as a threat to maintaining our democracy. These writers are almost uniform in their concern for the natural process of learning that characterizes all young people. Respecting that process, they believe, is a key to intelligent education practices.

Some Considerations about the Nature of Education

1. What is the relationship of education to good citizenship?
2. Which are more important in education: the humanities or the sciences?
3. Should general education prepare students for specific forms of employment?
4. What does it mean for education to be student centered?
5. What part of your education thus far has given you the most satisfaction?
6. Should the arts and music be curtailed to make room for core subject testing?
7. What are the essentials of a good education?
8. What is the difference between education and training?
9. What is the difference between charter schools and public schools?
10. How would you define a good education?



Michel Eyquem De Montaigne *Of the Education of Children*



Georgios Kollidas/Shutterstock.com

MICHEL EYQUEM DE MONTAIGNE (1533–1592) was born into a wealthy Catholic family near Bordeaux, France. Throughout his life, Montaigne maintained a commitment to the Catholic faith, despite the fact that during his lifetime terrible wars between

Catholics and Protestants raged in Europe. In terms of religion, Montaigne was a moderate and argued for tolerance.

Montaigne's father, a soldier, survived the religious wars, and when he returned home he brought with him advanced ideas about education. Some of those ideas are expressed in the following essay. Montaigne's father was elected mayor of Bordeaux and set an example for his son by working in public service. In 1581, Montaigne himself was elected mayor of Bordeaux and served for four years. Before he retired to write, - Montaigne had a long career in government.

As a child, Montaigne's tutor and servants spoke to him only in Latin, which became his native language for his first six years. Early on he read Virgil and Ovid as well as other classical authors. Since Latin was the second language of educated Europeans and the language of many of the most important books he would read, he was at an early advantage in school. He went to Guyenne College in Bordeaux — essentially a grammar school — at age six, and then later to Toulouse to study law. He became a lawyer attached to the Bordeaux Parlement, but he spent some of his time in Paris. He developed one of the most important friendships of his life in Bordeaux with Etienne de La Boétie (1530–1563), a writer who inspired one of Montaigne's greatest essays, "Of Friendship." In 1571, three years after his father's death and his inheritance of the estate of Montaigne, he retired to pursue a life of thought and reflection.

Retirement produced a touch of melancholy, so he began a project that he thought of as a personal self-examination. He had St. Augustine's *Confessions* as an inspiration, but what he produced had no previous model. His *Essays*, as they came to be known, were original in form and have spawned innumerable imitations. But for Montaigne, the essays were not studies of things outside himself, but rather studies of his own nature and his own concerns. He said of himself that he was not looking outside, but inside — that the true subject of his essays was his inner life.

His first volume of twenty-one essays was produced in 1575, followed by two volumes of essays in 1580. Subsequent essays and revisions of earlier ones appeared until his death in 1592. His subjects are diverse: "Of Sadness," "Whether the Governor of a Besieged Place Should Go Out to Parley," "Of Idleness," "Of Liars," "Of Constancy," "Of Cannibals," "Of Drunkenness," "Of Vanity," "Of Experience," "Of the Punishment of Cowardice," and many more. Because of his early publication of "Apology for Raymond Sebond," in which he discusses the myriad ways in which people worship God, he gained a reputation for being a skeptic — one who is much quicker to doubt than to believe. As a skeptic, Montaigne found it easy to be tolerant of the behavior and beliefs of others — he felt he had no grounds for thinking that the way he did things was so correct that all others must follow his precepts. He felt, for example, that Stoic philosophies, which insisted that everything was the result of the divine will and that there was little people could do beyond enduring life as it was, were too limiting and did not respect the complexities of human difference.

MONTAIGNE'S RHETORIC

Montaigne was a lawyer, which meant that he was well educated and trained in argumentation. He studied logic and rhetoric and knew how to tailor a piece of writing to any audience. In “Of the Education of Children” his primary audience is Countess Diane de la Foix, pregnant with her first child, but the essay is also a self-reflective meditation on Montaigne himself as a student. As his editions became well known and he gained a very large audience, he began a pattern of incessantly revising and rethinking his work. Nonetheless, the hallmark of most of his essays is a relaxed form that meanders from one thought to the next, developing through the association of ideas. In a sense, the essays give insight into the associative nature of his mind. He responds to what he observes and writes what he thinks at a given moment. The result is writing that does not seem dogmatic or rigid, but flexible, cordial, and inviting.

Among the special rhetorical qualities of his writing is his tendency to produce pithy sentences that become epigrams — for example, “Only the fools are certain and assured” ([para. 8](#)), “He who follows another follows nothing” ([para. 8](#)), and “Let him be taught not so much the histories as how to judge them” ([para. 21](#)). In addition, he quotes classical writers such as Dante, Cicero, Horace, Propertius, and many others in support of his own views.

Montaigne is often praised for his ability to conjure up intense imagery. In this essay, his gift for metaphor is striking. Early on, he compares the progress of a child in school to the gait of a horse

when he says of the tutor: “It is good that he should have his pupil trot before him, to judge the child’s pace” ([para. 4](#)). Later, when speaking of how one makes use of wide reading of Plato and others, he uses the metaphor of bees: “The bees plunder the flowers here and there, but afterward they make of them honey, which is all theirs” ([para. 8](#)). Like bees, children should read widely and then, rather than adopt one or another position taken from a book, make the ideas thus gathered their own. As - Montaigne implies, this will come from judging well and avoiding dogmatic acceptance.

One of the unusual rhetorical techniques he uses is personification. Late in the essay, he personifies Virtue as a woman: “Virtue’s tool is moderation, not strength. Socrates, her prime favorite, deliberately gives up his strength, to slip into the naturalness and ease of her gait. She is the nursing mother of human pleasures” ([para. 27](#)).

Montaigne also reveals that he has a sense of humor. In [paragraph 26](#) he suggests that if the tutor has a dull child who wants to play instead of learn, “I see no other remedy than for his tutor to strangle him early, if there are no witnesses, or apprentice him to a pastry cook in some good town.”

Throughout the essay, Montaigne recommends some very interesting principles of education. The most important is that the tutor is not to fill the student’s head with useless information, especially the kind of information that is to be memorized and recited. As he states, “To know by heart is not to know” ([para. 11](#)).

What the student must aim for is judgment and understanding, which involves being skeptical enough to ask questions rather than to accept authorities — even Aristotle — without complete and independent examination.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Michel Eyquem de Montaigne's "[Of the Education of Children](#)." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

- What should be the student's attitude toward authority?
- Which are the best writers for the student to read?
- How should the tutor behave toward his student?

From *The Complete Works*. Translated by Donald M. Frame.

Of the Education of Children

Madame, learning is a great ornament and a wonderfully serviceable tool, notably for people raised to such a degree of fortune as you are. In truth, it does not receive its proper use in mean and lowborn hands. It is much prouder to lend its resources to conducting a war, governing a people, or gaining the friendship of a prince or a foreign nation, than to constructing a dialectical argument, pleading an appeal, or prescribing a mass of pills. Thus, Madame, because I think you will not forget this element in the education of your children, you who have tasted its sweetness and who are of a literary race (for we still have the writings of those ancient counts of Foix¹ from whom his lordship the count your husband and yourself are descended; and François, Monsieur de Candale, your uncle, every day brings forth others, which will extend for many centuries the knowledge of this quality in your family), I want to tell you a single fancy of mine on this subject, which is contrary to common usage; it is all that I can contribute to your service in this matter.

The task of the tutor that you will give your son, upon whose choice depends the whole success of his education, has many other important parts, but I do not touch upon them, since I cannot offer anything worth while concerning them; and in this matter on which I venture to give him advice, he will take it only as far as it seems good to him. For a child of noble family who seeks learning not for gain (for such an abject goal is unworthy of the graces and favor of the Muses, and besides it looks to others and depends on

them), or so much for external advantages as for his own, and to enrich and furnish himself inwardly, since I would rather make of him an able man than a learned man, I would also urge that care be taken to choose a guide with a well-made rather than a well-filled head; that both these qualities should be required of him, but more particularly character and understanding than learning; and that he should go about his job in a novel way.

Our tutors never stop bawling into our ears, as though they were pouring water into a funnel; and our task is only to repeat what has been told us. I should like the tutor to correct this practice, and right from the start, according to the capacity of the mind he has in hand, to begin putting it through its paces, making it taste things, choose them, and discern them by itself; sometimes clearing the way for him, sometimes letting him clear his own way. I don't want him to think and talk alone, I want him to listen to his pupil speaking in his turn. Socrates, and later Arcesilaus,² first had their disciples speak, and then they spoke to them. *The authority of those who teach is often an obstacle to those who want to learn* [Cicero].

It is good that he should have his pupil trot before him, to judge the child's pace and how much he must stoop to match his strength. For lack of this proportion we spoil everything; and to be able to hit it right and to go along in it evenly is one of the hardest tasks that I know; it is the achievement of a lofty and very strong soul to know how to come down to a childish gait and guide it. I walk more firmly and surely uphill than down.

If, as is our custom, the teachers undertake to regulate many minds of such different capacities and forms with the same lesson and a similar measure of guidance, it is no wonder if in a whole race of children they find barely two or three who reap any proper fruit from their teaching.

Let him be asked for an account not merely of the words of his lesson, but of its sense and substance, and let him judge the profit he has made by the testimony not of his memory, but of his life. Let him be made to show what he has just learned in a hundred aspects, and apply it to as many different subjects, to see if he has yet properly grasped it and made it his own, planning his progress according to the pedagogical method of Plato. It is a sign of rawness and ingestion to disgorge food just as we swallowed it. The stomach has not done its work if it has not changed the condition and form of what has been given it to cook.

Our mind moves only on faith, being bound and constrained to the whim of others' fancies, a slave and a captive under the authority of their teaching. We have been so well accustomed to leading strings that we have no free motion left; our vigor and liberty are extinct. *They never become their own guardians* [Seneca]. I had a private talk with a man at Pisa, a good man, but such an Aristotelian that the most sweeping of his dogmas is that the touchstone and measure of all solid speculations and of all truth is conformity with the teaching of Aristotle; that outside of this there is nothing but chimeras and inanity; that Aristotle saw everything and said everything. This proposition, having been interpreted a

little too broadly and unfairly, put him once, and kept him long, in great danger of the Inquisition at Rome.

Let the tutor make his charge pass everything through a sieve and lodge nothing in his head on mere authority and trust: let not Aristotle's principles be principles to him any more than those of the Stoics or Epicureans. Let this variety of ideas be set before him; he will choose if he can; if not, he will remain in doubt. Only the fools are certain and assured.

For doubting pleases me no less than knowing.

—DANTE

For if he embraces Xenophon's³ and Plato's opinions by his own reasoning, they will no longer be theirs, they will be his. He who follows another follows nothing. He finds nothing; indeed he seeks nothing. *We are not under a king; let each one claim his own freedom* [Seneca]. Let him know that he knows, at least. He must imbibe their ways of thinking, not learn their precepts. And let him boldly forget, if he wants, where he got them, but let him know how to make them his own. Truth and reason are common to everyone, and no more belong to the man who first spoke them than to the man who says them later. It is no more according to Plato than according to me, since he and I understand and see it in the same way. The bees plunder the flowers here and there, but afterward they make of them honey, which is all theirs; it is no longer thyme or marjoram. Even so with the pieces borrowed from others; he will transform and blend them to make a work that is all

his own, to wit, his judgment. His education, work, and study aim only at forming this.

Let him hide all the help he has had, and show only what he has made of it. The pillagers, the borrowers, parade their buildings, their purchases, not what they get from others. You do not see the gratuities of a member of a Parlement, you see the alliances he has gained and honors for his children. No one makes public his receipts; everyone makes public his acquisitions.

The gain from our study is to have become better and wiser by it.

It is the understanding, Epicharmus⁴ used to say, that sees and hears; it is the understanding that makes profit of everything, that arranges everything, that acts, dominates, and reigns; all other things are blind, deaf, and soulless. Truly we make it servile and cowardly, by leaving it no freedom to do anything by itself. Who ever asked his pupil what he thinks of rhetoric or grammar, or of such-and-such a saying of Cicero? They slap them into our memory with all their feathers on, like oracles in which the letters and syllables are the substance of the matter. To know by heart is not to know; it is to retain what we have given our memory to keep. What we know rightly we dispose of, without looking at the model, without turning our eyes toward our book. Sad competence, a purely bookish competence! I intend it to serve as decoration, not as foundation, according to the opinion of Plato, who says that steadfastness, faith, and sincerity are the real philosophy, and the other sciences which aim at other things are only powder and rouge.

I wish Paluel or Pompey,⁵ those fine dancers of my time, could teach us capers just by performing them before us and without moving us from our seats, as those people want to train our understanding without setting it in motion; or that we could be taught to handle a horse, or a pike, or a lute, or our voice, without practicing at it, as those people want to teach us to judge well and to speak well, without having us practice either speaking or judging.

Now, for this apprenticeship, everything that comes to our eyes is book enough: a page's prank, a servant's blunder, a remark at table, are so many new materials.

For this reason, mixing with men is wonderfully useful, and visiting foreign countries, not merely to bring back, in the manner of our French noblemen, knowledge of the measurements of the Santa Rotonda, or of the richness of Signora Livia's⁶ drawers, or, like some others, how much longer or wider Nero's⁷ face is in some old ruin there than on some similar medallion; but to bring back knowledge of the characters and ways of those nations, and to rub and polish our brains by contact with those of others. I should like the tutor to start taking him abroad at a tender age, and first, to kill two birds with one stone, in those neighboring nations where the language is farthest from our own and where the tongue cannot be bent to it unless you train it early.

Likewise it is an opinion accepted by all, that it is not right to bring up a child in the lap of his parents. This natural love makes them too tender and lax, even the wisest of them. They are capable

neither of chastising his faults nor of seeing him brought up roughly, as he should be, and hazardously. They could not endure his returning sweating and dusty from his exercise, drinking hot, drinking cold, or see him on a skittish horse, or up against a tough fencer, foil in hand, or with his first harquebus.⁸ For there is no help for it: if you want to make a man of him, unquestionably you must not spare him in his youth, and must often clash with the rules of medicine:

Let him live beneath the open sky

And dangerously.

—HORACE

It is not enough to toughen his soul; we must also toughen his muscles. The soul is too hard pressed unless it is seconded, and has too great a task doing two jobs alone. I know how much mine labors in company with a body so tender and so sensitive, which leans so hard upon it. And I often perceive in my reading that in their writings my masters give weight, as examples of great spirit and stoutheartedness, to acts that are likely to owe more to thickness of skin and toughness of bones. I have seen men, women, and children naturally so constituted that a beating is less to them than a flick of the finger to me; who move neither tongue nor eyebrow at the blows they receive. When athletes imitate philosophers in endurance, their strength is that of sinews rather than of heart.

Now practice at enduring work is practice at enduring pain *Work hardens one against pain* [Cicero]. The boy must be broken in to

the pain and harshness of exercises, to build him up against the pain and harshness of dislocation, colic, cauterization, and the dungeon, and torture. For he may yet be a prey to the last two, which threaten the good as well as the bad in a time like this. We have proof of this right now. Whoever fights the laws threatens even the best of men with the scourge and the noose.

And besides, the authority of the tutor, which should be sovereign over the pupil, is interrupted and hampered by the presence of the parents. Add the fact that the respect the whole household pays the boy, and the consciousness of the power and greatness of his house, are in my opinion no slight drawbacks at that age.

In this school of dealing with men I have often noticed this flaw, that instead of gaining knowledge of others we strive only to give knowledge of ourselves, and take more pains to peddle our wares than to get new ones. Silence and modesty are very good qualities for social intercourse. This boy will be trained to be sparing and thrifty with his ability when he has acquired it; not to take exception to the stupid things and wild tales that will be told in his presence, for it is uncivil and annoying to hit at everything that is not to our taste. Let him be content with correcting himself, and not seem to reproach others for everything that he refuses to do, or set himself up against common practices. *A man may be wise without ostentation, without arousing envy* [Seneca]. Let him shun these domineering and uncivil airs, and this childish ambition to try to seem more clever by being different and to gain reputation by finding fault and being original. As it is becoming only to great poets to indulge in poetic license, so it is tolerable

only for great and illustrious souls to take unusual liberties. *If Socrates and Aristippus have done something contrary to the rules of behavior and custom, let him not think that he has a right to do the same; for they have gained that privilege by great and divine merits* [Cicero]....

Put into his head an honest curiosity to inquire into all things; whatever is unusual around him he will see: a building, a fountain, a man, the field of an ancient battle, the place where Caesar or Charlemagne passed:

Which land is parched with heat, which numb with frost,

What wind drives sails to the Italian coast.

—PROPERTIUS

He will inquire into the conduct, the resources, and the alliances of this prince and that. These are things very pleasant to learn and very useful to know.

In this association with men I mean to include, and foremost, those who live only in the memory of books. He will associate, by means of histories, with those great souls of the best ages. It is a vain study, if you will; but also, if you will, it is a study of inestimable value, and the only study, as Plato tells us, in which the Lacedaemonians⁹ had kept a stake for themselves. What profit will he not gain in this field by reading the *Lives* of our Plutarch?¹⁰ But let my guide remember the object of his task, and let him not impress on his pupil so much the date of the destruction of Carthage as the characters of Hannibal and

Scipio,¹¹ nor so much where Marcellus died as why his death there showed him unworthy of his duty. Let him be taught not so much the histories as how to judge them. That, in my opinion, is of all matters the one to which we apply our minds in the most varying degree. I have read in Livy¹² a hundred things that another man has not read in him. Plutarch has read in him a hundred besides the ones I could read, and perhaps besides what the author had put in. For some it is a purely grammatical study; for others, the skeleton of philosophy, in which the most abstruse parts of our nature are penetrated.

There are in Plutarch many extensive discussions, well worth knowing, for in my judgment he is the master workman in that field; but there are a thousand that he has only just touched on; he merely points out with his finger where we are to go, if we like, and sometimes is content to make only a stab at the heart of a subject. We must snatch these bits out of there and display them properly. Just as that remark of his, that the inhabitants of Asia served one single man because they could not pronounce one single syllable, which is “No,” may have given the matter and the impulsion to La Boétie¹³ for his *Voluntary Servitude*. Just to see him pick out a trivial action in a man’s life, or a word which seems unimportant: that is a treatise in itself. It is a pity that men of understanding are so fond of brevity; doubtless their reputation gains by it, but we lose by it. Plutarch would rather we praised him for his judgment than for his knowledge; he would rather leave us wanting more of him than satiated. He knew that even of good things one may say too much, and that Alexandridas justly reproached the man who was talking sensibly but too long to the

Ephors: "O stranger, you say what you should, but otherwise than you should." Those who have a thin body fill it out with padding; those who have slim substance swell it out with words.

Wonderful brilliance may be gained for human judgment by getting to know men.

Wonderful brilliance may be gained for human judgment by getting to know men. We are all huddled and concentrated in ourselves, and our vision is reduced to the length of our nose. - Socrates was asked where he was from. He replied not "Athens," but "The world." He, whose imagination was fuller and more extensive, embraced the universe as his city, and distributed his knowledge, his company, and his affections to all mankind, unlike us who look only at what is underfoot. When the vines freeze in my village, my priest infers that the wrath of God is upon the human race, and judges that the cannibals already have the pip. Seeing our civil wars, who does not cry out that this mechanism is being turned topsy-turvy and that the judgment day has us by the throat, without reflecting that many worse things have happened, and that ten thousand parts of the world, to our one, are meanwhile having a gay time? Myself, considering their licentiousness and impunity, I am amazed to see our wars so gentle and mild. When the hail comes down on a man's head, it seems to him that the whole hemisphere is in tempest and storm. And a Savoyard said that if that fool of a French king had known how to play his cards right, he would have had it in him to become

chief steward to the duke of Savoy. His imagination conceived no higher dignity than that of his master. We are all unconsciously in this error, an error of great consequence and harm. But whoever considers as in a painting the great picture of our mother Nature in her full majesty; whoever reads such universal and constant variety in her face; whoever finds himself there, and not merely himself, but a whole kingdom, as a dot made with a very fine brush; that man alone estimates things according to their true proportions....

After the tutor has told his pupil what will help make him wiser and better, he will explain to him the meaning of logic, physics, geometry, rhetoric; and the science he chooses, now that his judgment is already formed, he will soon master. His lesson will be now in talk, now in a book; now his tutor will give him straight from the author some passage that is suitable to this purpose in his education, now he will give him the marrow and the substance predigested. And if the tutor himself is not familiar enough with books to find all the fine passages that are in them for his purpose, some man of letters may be associated with him, who as each need arises shall supply him with the material he requires, which he may then sort out and dispense to his nursling. And who can doubt that this kind of teaching is easier and more natural than that of Gaza?¹⁴ There we find thorny and unpleasant precepts and empty and fleshless words that you cannot get a hold on, nothing that rouses your mind. Here the mind finds something to bite and feed on. The fruit of it is incomparably greater, and also it will be sooner ripe....

My tutor, who knows he must fill his pupil's mind as much, or more, with affection as with reverence for virtue, will be able to tell him that the poets agree with the common view, and to set his finger on the fact that the gods make men sweat harder in the approaches to the chambers of Venus than of Pallas.¹⁵ And when he begins to feel his oats, and the choice is offered him between Bradamante and Angelica as a mistress to be enjoyed — a natural, active, spirited, manly but not mannish beauty, next to a soft, affected, delicate, artificial beauty; one disguised as a boy, wearing a shining helmet, the other dressed as a girl, wearing a headdress of pearls — the tutor will think his pupil manly even in love if he chooses quite differently from that effeminate shepherd of Phrygia.¹⁶

He will teach him this new lesson, that the value and height of true virtue lies in the ease, utility, and pleasure of its practice, which is so far from being difficult that children can master it as well as men, the simple as well as the subtle. Virtue's tool is moderation, not strength. Socrates, her prime favorite, deliberately gives up his strength, to slip into the naturalness and ease of her gait. She is the nursing mother of human pleasures. By making them just, she makes them sure and pure. By moderating them, she keeps them in breath and appetite. By withdrawing the ones she refuses, she makes us keener for the ones she allows us; and she allows us abundantly all those that nature wills, even to satiety, in maternal fashion, if not to the point of lassitude (unless perchance we want to say that the regimen that stops the drinker short of drunkenness, the eater short of indigestion, the lecher short of baldness, is an enemy of our pleasures). If she lacks the fortune

of ordinary men, she rises above it or does without it, and makes herself a different sort of fortune that is all her own, and no longer fluctuating and unsteady. She knows how to be rich and powerful and learned, and lie on perfumed mattresses. She loves life, she loves beauty and glory and health. But her own particular task is to know how to enjoy those blessings with temperance, and to lose them with fortitude: a task far more noble than harsh, without which the course of any life is denatured, turbulent, and deformed, and fit to be associated with those dangers, those brambles, and those monsters.

If this pupil happens to be of such an odd disposition that he would rather listen to some idle story than to the account of a fine voyage or a wise conversation when he hears one; if, at the sound of the drum that calls the youthful ardor of his companions to arms, he turns aside to another that invites him to the tricks of the jugglers; if, by his own preference, he does not find it more pleasant and sweet to return dusty and victorious from a combat than from tennis or a ball with the prize for that exercise, I see no other remedy than for his tutor to strangle him early, if there are no witnesses, or apprentice him to a pastry cook in some good town, even though he were the son of a duke; in accordance with Plato's precept that children should be placed not according to the faculties of their father, but according to the faculties of their soul.

Since it is philosophy that teaches us to live, and since there is a lesson in it for childhood as well as for the other ages, why is it not imparted to children?

He still is yielding clay; now, now, ere he congeal,

Tirelessly we must shape him on the potter's wheel.

—PERSIUS

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What are Montaigne's assumptions about the social class of the student?
2. How is the tutor to help shape the character of the student?
3. What does Montaigne think about a tutor's demand that children repeat what they are told?
4. Should the child be silent in the presence of the tutor?
5. What are Montaigne's views about the capacity of individual students to learn? What is the tutor's responsibility to the individual?
6. What are Montaigne's attitudes toward accepting the views of authorities? When, if ever, can those views be accepted?
7. Of what use is travel to the student?
8. Why should parents be somewhere else when the student is with the tutor?

SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING

1. Throughout the essay, Montaigne insists that the tutor help the child make his learning his own. He writes, "let him judge the profit he has made by the testimony not of his memory, but of his life" ([para. 6](#)). What does Montaigne mean by making learning "his own"? How do you make your own learning your own?
2. In [paragraph 5](#) Montaigne complains that when "teachers undertake to regulate many minds of such different capacities and forms with

the same lesson,” only a few students will get much out of it. In other words, Montaigne recommends that different students receive different “lessons.” To what extent has your own experience confirmed or denied this observation? Compare your experiences in large classes with experiences either in small classes or tutorials. How does your capacity for learning alter depending on the size of your class?

3. In [paragraph 8](#) Montaigne discourses on the metaphor of the bees, who sample many flowers and make their honey from a unique mixture of pollen. Here he recommends that students read widely, collect many ideas, and then make those ideas their own. How can this be done? What is your own experience in gathering evidence and opinions and drawing your own conclusions? Give a clear example in which you have researched and developed your own views.
4. Montaigne recommends that children be removed from their parents when in school, as he was. Review his arguments in [paragraph 15](#) and take a stand on this issue. As much as possible, model your response on Montaigne’s essay. Make an effort to use metaphor where appropriate to bolster your argument.
5. In [paragraph 16](#) Montaigne addresses the physical training of the child. He insists that physical training enables the child to face the trials of Renaissance life. What kinds of physical trials do you think the modern student would likely face later in life? Use as many examples of current physical threats as possible, and suggest ways in which physical training may help the student later in life.
6. Write your own essay titled “Of the Education of Children.” Be sure to use some of Montaigne’s techniques: use of metaphor and vivid imagery, quotations from important writers, and details concerning the point of instruction. What would you recommend, beginning with grade school, as the best way to educate children? What are your educational ideals and what would you recommend as the best setting and structure for a good education?

CONNECTIONS

- ■ 1. Compare Montaigne's views on education with those of Maria Montessori. These thinkers are more than four centuries removed from one another and come from societies that have totally different attitudes toward social class. What links Montaigne and Montessori in their common goal for the education of the young? What separates them? Compare them point by point. Examine, too, their respective rhetorical approaches to their subject. What are the principal ways in which their writing differs?

2. Would bell hooks or Marilynne Robinson agree with Montaigne's views about the education of children? Consider Montaigne's attitudes toward accepting authority, making one's learning one's own, the usefulness of travel, the separation of the child from home, and any other important issues you feel these writers either agree or disagree about.



Maria Montessori *The Montessori Method*



Popperfoto/Getty Images

MARIA MONTESSORI (1870–1952) was born in Chiaravelle, Ancona, Italy. When she was twelve, her family moved to Rome so that she could receive a better education. At the age of fourteen, despite her father's misgivings and traditional views, Montessori enrolled in a technical college and studied

engineering. Her interest in biology, however, led her to study medicine instead, and with Pope Leo XIII's help, Montessori was admitted to the University of Rome's medical school. In 1894 she graduated and became Italy's first female doctor, a feat that reinforced her commitment to women's rights.

Her appointment working with mentally challenged children in a hospital in Rome in 1897 catalyzed her interest in education. Montessori's work with these children convinced her that their problems were more connected with their education than with any perceived mental defects. She hypothesized that a change in education would make a large difference in the lives of these children, and she decided to devote her life to improving education for all children, not just those with mental handicaps.

In 1898 Montessori, unwed and devoutly Catholic, gave birth to a son, Mario. Giuseppe Montesano, the child's father, was a fellow educator who later became the director of an organization that trained Montessori-method teachers.

Montessori returned to the University of Rome in 1901 to study psychology and philosophy. When she completed her degree in 1904, she was made professor of anthropology, a position she held until 1906, when she began the experiment that altered her career forever. In 1907 she founded the *Casa dei Bambini* (Children's House) in one of Rome's worst slums. She helped design the building because she felt that the environment in which children studied should be conducive to their learning. In the beginning, her school was essentially a preschool daycare

program. Her approach was based on her observations of how children naturally learn and teach each other. Her purpose was to avoid blunting children's natural impulse to learn what interests them.

Her methods differed in several ways from those then in use. She respected all her students, regardless of their background. She insisted on providing them with moveable child-sized furniture, and she maintained a quiet, clean, and safe environment at all times. Montessori's teaching methods showed results immediately. Although the children entered school as unruly as one might expect, it was not long before they began to reveal remarkable skills; in fact, some of the three- and four-year-olds had learned to read and were beginning to write. As Montessori observed elsewhere, "then we saw them 'absorb' far more than reading and writing ... it was botany, zoology, mathematics, geography, and all with the same ease, spontaneously."

Montessori spent almost three decades helping to establish schools based on her education model in Europe and North America. Because of the rise of Mussolini and Italian fascism, she left Italy in 1934, but found herself in the midst of the Spanish Civil War in Barcelona. A British cruiser rescued her in 1936. She then went to Holland and opened a training center for her methods, which she had introduced in Amsterdam in 1929. She was in India in 1940 when that country entered World War II, and being Italian nationals, she and her son were interned as enemy aliens. After the war, she established Montessori schools in India and Sri Lanka. She died in Holland in 1952, still involved in her work.

The Montessori method is child-centered, aimed at letting the child determine solutions to the problems developed in the classroom. Montessori thought it important that a task involve the child's whole personality and that the teacher's role was to prepare the child to approach that task. For example, the senses had to be addressed, so there was a great deal of emphasis on seeing, hearing, and touching, which prepared children for intellectual processes that depend on those skills — as, for instance, reading depends on seeing. Parents were expected to be part of the process, and room was made for their visits to the school. Essentially, Montessori established an environment that freed children to learn spontaneously. Educators around the world still use the methods Montessori developed more than a hundred years ago.

MONTESSORI'S RHETORIC

In the selection that follows, which is excerpted from the opening chapter of the book *The Montessori Method*, Montessori crafts a subtle argument for a new kind of “scientific pedagogy” (a scientific method of instruction) that emphasizes the freedom of the student. Montessori eventually moves to the adult life of people who have gone through traditional schools to point out that the restrictions they have in their daily office or work lives resemble the restrictions that characterized the environment in which they were taught as children. She argues in the early part of her discussion ([para. 9](#)) that stationary desks, benches, and chairs are proof that “the principle of slavery still pervades pedagogy.”

Scientific approaches to teaching had been in vogue in the early years of the twentieth century, but they had been restricted to various quantifiable measures, such as the circumference of heads and upper bodies, general height and weight, or results of various psychological tests. These, Montessori argues, are scientifically irrelevant to the teaching of children. Her science depends on careful observation of the ways in which children pursue their own learning. Once those ways are understood, Montessori argues, better teaching and learning will result.

One of her rhetorical methods is comparison. She describes the zoologist who studies butterflies that have been killed and stuck on pins, “their outspread wings motionless” ([para. 5](#)). A teacher who behaves like the zoologist would teach in a school “where the children are repressed in the spontaneous expression of their personality till they are almost like dead beings. In such a school the children, like butterflies mounted on pins, are fastened each to his place, the desk, spreading the useless wings of barren and meaningless knowledge which they have acquired” ([para. 6](#)). In this paragraph she argues for life in the classroom and for freedom of the individual.

Montessori further develops her argument by referencing a concrete situation: the architecture of the classroom, with a close examination of the stationary desks and chairs. She spends quite a bit of time with this material ([paras. 9–20](#)) because she wants us to realize that people have thought out this unworkable system in a scientific fashion. She introduces a personal anecdote when she describes the woman who presented her with a brace or harness

in which to place children in the classroom, thus absolutely immobilizing them in a manner similar to zoologists pinning butterflies. As she states, this approach perfects the “immobility” of the child and his or her repression.

The conflict between methods that produce “an instrument of slavery” in the classroom and the “movement of social liberation” that is growing throughout the modern world is central to much of the rest of her argument. Her example of the use of braces for spinal curvature is almost an absurd argument, but its absurdity makes all the more intense the insight Montessori has into educational practices that must be overturned. They look scientific, but they ignore the study of the child.

In [paragraphs 37–40](#) Montessori addresses the inner spirit of the child. In this section, as in the opening paragraphs, some of her own religious views peek out in her emphasis on the freedom of the spirit. As she points out, the death of the spirit occurs in slavery, and her argument against slavery takes its shape in a reminder that “[a]ll forms of slavery tend little by little to weaken and disappear, even the sexual slavery of woman” ([para. 28](#)). Montessori ends her essay with an emphasis on the inner life of the child and a warning concerning criminality, which she considers a form of slavery. But criminals are a small portion of society and their punishment is exact. “The real punishment of normal man is the loss of the consciousness of that individual power and greatness which are the sources of his inner life” ([para. 41](#)). By respecting children, observing their natural behaviors, and permitting them to pursue tasks freely in an environment that is

conducive to real learning, Montessori believes educators can bring out the best qualities in every individual.

From *The Montessori Method*. Translated by Anne E. George.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Maria Montessori's "[The Montessori Method](#)." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What is the basis of scientific pedagogy for Montessori?
2. How does school furniture affect the education of the child?
3. What effect does freedom have on the education of the child?

The Montessori Method

The interest in humanity to which we wish to educate the teacher must be characterised by the intimate relationship between the observer and the individual to be observed; a relationship which does not exist between the student of zoology or botany and that form of nature which he studies. Man cannot love the insect or the chemical reaction which he studies, without sacrificing a part of himself. This self-sacrifice seems to one who looks at it from the standpoint of the world, a veritable renunciation of life itself, almost a martyrdom.

But the love of man for man is a far more tender thing, and so simple that it is universal. To love in this way is not the privilege of any especially prepared intellectual class, but lies within the reach of all men.

To give an idea of this second form of preparation, that of the spirit, let us try to enter into the minds and hearts of those first followers of Christ Jesus as they heard Him speak of a Kingdom not of this world, greater far than any earthly kingdom, no matter how royally conceived. In their simplicity they asked of Him, "Master, tell us who shall be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" To which Christ, caressing the head of a little child who, with reverent, wondering eyes, looked into His face, replied, "Whosoever shall become as one of these little ones, he shall be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven." Now let us picture among those to whom these words were spoken, an ardent, worshipping

soul, who takes them into his heart. With a mixture of respect and love, of sacred curiosity and of a desire to achieve this spiritual greatness, he sets himself to observe every manifestation of this little child. Even such an observer placed in a classroom filled with little children will not be the new educator whom we wish to form. But let us seek to implant in the soul the self-sacrificing spirit of the scientist with the reverent love of the disciple of Christ, and we shall have prepared the *spirit* of the teacher. From the child itself he will learn how to perfect himself as an educator.

Let us consider the attitude of the teacher in the light of another example. Picture to yourself one of our botanists or zoologists experienced in the technique of observation and experimentation; one who has traveled in order to study “certain fungi” in their native environment. This scientist has made his observations in open country and, then, by the aid of his microscope and of all his laboratory appliances, has carried on the later research work in the most minute way possible. He is, in fact, a scientist who understands what it is to study nature, and who is conversant with all the means which modern experimental science offers for this study.

Now let us imagine such a man appointed, by reason of the original work he has done, to a chair of science in some university, with the task before him of doing further original research work with hymenoptera.¹ Let us suppose that, arrived at his post, he is shown a glass-covered case containing a number of beautiful butterflies, mounted by means of pins, their outspread wings motionless. The student will say that this is some child’s play, not

material for scientific study, that these specimens in the box are more fitly a part of the game which the little boys play, chasing butterflies and catching them in a net. With such material as this the experimental scientist can do nothing.

The situation would be very much the same if we should place a teacher who, according to our conception of the term, is scientifically prepared, in one of the public schools where the children are repressed in the spontaneous expression of their personality till they are almost like dead beings. In such a school the children, like butterflies mounted on pins, are fastened each to his place, the desk, spreading the useless wings of barren and meaningless knowledge which they have acquired.

It is not enough, then, to prepare in our Masters the scientific spirit. We must also make ready the *school* for their observation. The school must permit the *free, natural manifestations* of the *child* if in the school scientific pedagogy is to be born. This is the essential reform.

No one may affirm that such a principle already exists in pedagogy and in the school. It is true that some pedagogues, led by Rousseau,² have given voice to impracticable principles and vague aspirations for the liberty of the child, but the true concept of liberty is practically unknown to educators. They often have the same concept of liberty which animates a people in the hour of rebellion from slavery, or perhaps, the conception of *social liberty*, which although it is a more elevated idea is still invariably restricted. "Social liberty" signifies always one more round of

Jacob's ladder. In other words it signifies a partial liberation, the liberation of a country, of a class, or of thought.

The principle of slavery still pervades pedagogy, and, therefore, the same principle pervades the school.

That concept of liberty which must inspire pedagogy is, instead, universal. The biological sciences of the nineteenth century have shown it to us when they have offered us the means for studying life. If, therefore, the old-time pedagogy foresaw or vaguely expressed the principle of studying the pupil before educating him, and of leaving him free in his spontaneous manifestations, such an intuition, indefinite and barely expressed, was made possible of practical attainment only after the contribution of the experimental sciences during the last century. This is not a case for sophistry or discussion, it is enough that we state our point. He who would say that the principle of liberty informs the pedagogy of today, would make us smile as at a child who, before the box of mounted butterflies, should insist that they were alive and could fly. The principle of slavery still pervades pedagogy, and, therefore, the same principle pervades the school. I need only give one proof — the stationary desks and chairs. Here we have, for example, a striking evidence of the errors of the early materialistic scientific pedagogy which, with mistaken zeal and energy, carried the barren stones of science to the rebuilding of

the crumbling walls of the school. The schools were at first furnished with the long, narrow benches upon which the children were crowded together. Then came science and perfected the bench. In this work much attention was paid to the recent contributions of anthropology. The age of the child and the length of his limbs were considered in placing the seat at the right height. The distance between the seat and the desk was calculated with infinite care, in order that the child's back should not become deformed, and, finally, the seats were separated and the width so closely calculated that the child could barely seat himself upon it, while to stretch himself by making any lateral movements was impossible. This was done in order that he might be separated from his neighbor. These desks are constructed in such a way as to render the child visible in all his immobility. One of the ends sought through this separation is the prevention of immoral acts in the schoolroom. What shall we say of such prudence in a state of society where it would be considered scandalous to give voice to principles of sex morality in education, for fear we might thus contaminate innocence? And, yet, here we have science lending itself to this hypocrisy, fabricating machines! Not only this; obliging science goes farther still, perfecting the benches in such a way as to permit to the greatest possible extent the immobility of the child, or, if you wish, to repress every movement of the child.

It is all so arranged that, when the child is well-fitted into his place, the desk and chair themselves force him to assume the position considered to be hygienically comfortable. The seat, the footrest, the desks are arranged in such a way that the child can never stand at his work. He is allotted only sufficient space for sitting in

an erect position. It is in such ways that schoolroom desks and benches have advanced toward perfection. Every cult of the so-called scientific pedagogy has designed a model scientific desk. Not a few nations have become proud of their "national desk," — and in the struggle of competition these various machines have been patented.

Undoubtedly there is much that is scientific underlying the construction of these benches. Anthropology has been drawn upon in the measuring of the body and the diagnosis of the age; physiology, in the study of muscular movements; psychology, in regard to perversion of instincts; and, above all, hygiene, in the effort to prevent curvature of the spine. These desks were indeed scientific, following in their construction the anthropological study of the child. We have here, as I have said, an example of the literal application of science to the schools.

I believe that before very long we shall all be struck with great surprise by this attitude. It will seem incomprehensible that the fundamental error of the desk should not have been revealed earlier through the attention given to the study of infant hygiene, anthropology, and sociology, and through the general progress of thought. The marvel is greater when we consider that during the past years there has been stirring in almost every nation a movement toward the protection of the child.

I believe that it will not be many years before the public, scarcely believing the descriptions of these scientific benches, will come to touch with wondering hands the amazing seats that were

constructed for the purpose of preventing among our school children curvature of the spine!

The development of these scientific benches means that the pupils were subjected to a régime, which, even though they were born strong and straight, made it possible for them to become humpbacked! The vertebral column, biologically the most primitive, fundamental, and oldest part of the skeleton, the most fixed portion of our body, since the skeleton is the most solid portion of the organism — the vertebral column, which resisted and was strong through the desperate struggles of primitive man when he fought against the desert-lion, when he conquered the mammoth, when he quarried the solid rock and shaped the iron to his uses, bends, and cannot resist, under the yoke of the school.

It is incomprehensible that so-called *science* should have worked to perfect an instrument of slavery in the school without being enlightened by one ray from the movement of social liberation, growing and developing throughout the world. For the age of scientific benches was also the age of the redemption of the working classes from the yoke of unjust labor.

The tendency toward social liberty is most evident, and manifests itself on every hand. The leaders of the people make it their slogan, the laboring masses repeat the cry, scientific and socialistic publications voice the same movement, our journals are full of it. The underfed workman does not ask for a tonic, but for better economic conditions which shall prevent malnutrition. The miner who, through the stooping position maintained during many

hours of the day, is subject to inguinal rupture, does not ask for an abdominal support, but demands shorter hours and better working conditions, in order that he may be able to lead a healthy life like other men.

And when, during this same social epoch, we find that the children in our schoolrooms are working amid unhygienic conditions, so poorly adapted to normal development that even the skeleton becomes deformed, our response to this terrible revelation is an orthopedic bench. It is much as if we offered to the miner the abdominal brace, or arsenic to the underfed workman.

Some time ago a woman, believing me to be in sympathy with all scientific innovations concerning the school, showed me with evident satisfaction *a corset or brace for pupils*. She had invented this and felt that it would complete the work of the bench.

Surgery has still other means for the treatment of spinal curvature. I might mention orthopedic instruments, braces, and a method of periodically suspending the child, by the head or shoulders, in such a fashion that the weight of the body stretches and thus straightens the vertebral column. In the school, the orthopedic instrument in the shape of the desk is in great favor today; someone proposes the brace — one step farther and it will be suggested that we give the scholars a systematic course in the suspension method!

All this is the logical consequence of a material application of the methods of science to the decadent school. Evidently the rational

method of combating spinal curvature in the pupils, is to change the form of their work — so that they shall no longer be obliged to remain for so many hours a day in a harmful position. It is a conquest of liberty which the school needs, not the mechanism of a bench.

Even were the stationary seat helpful to the child's body, it would still be a dangerous and unhygienic feature of the environment, through the difficulty of cleaning the room perfectly when the furniture cannot be moved. The foot rests, which cannot be removed, accumulate the dirt carried in daily from the street by the many little feet. Today there is a general transformation in the matter of house furnishings. They are made lighter and simpler so that they may be easily moved, dusted, and even washed. But the school seems blind to the transformation of the social environment.

It behooves us to think of what may happen to the *spirit* of the child who is condemned to grow in conditions so artificial that his very bones may become deformed. When we speak of the redemption of the workingman, it is always understood that beneath the most apparent form of suffering, such as poverty of the blood, or ruptures, there exists that other wound from which the soul of the man who is subjected to any form of slavery must suffer. It is at this deeper wrong that we aim when we say that the workman must be redeemed through liberty. We know only too well that when a man's very blood has been consumed or his intestines wasted away through his work, his soul must have lain oppressed in darkness, rendered insensible, or, it may be, killed

within him. The *moral* degradation of the slave is, above all things, the weight that opposes the progress of humanity — humanity striving to rise and held back by this great burden. The cry of redemption speaks far more clearly for the souls of men than for their bodies.

What shall we say then, when the question before us is that of *educating children*?

We know only too well the sorry spectacle of the teacher who, in the ordinary schoolroom, must pour certain cut and dried facts into the heads of the scholars. In order to succeed in this barren task, she finds it necessary to discipline her pupils into immobility and to force their attention. Prizes and punishments are ever-ready and efficient aids to the master who must force into a given attitude of mind and body those who are condemned to be his listeners.

It is true that today it is deemed expedient to abolish official whippings and habitual blows, just as the awarding of prizes has become less ceremonious. These partial reforms are another prop approved of by science, and offered to the support of the decadent school. Such prizes and punishments are, if I may be allowed the expression, the *bench* of the soul, the instrument of slavery for the spirit. Here, however, these are not applied to lessen deformities, but to provoke them. The prize and the punishment are incentives toward unnatural or forced effort, and, therefore we certainly cannot speak of the natural development of the child in connection with them. The jockey offers a piece of

sugar to his horse before jumping into the saddle, the coachman beats his horse that he may respond to the signs given by the reins; and, yet, neither of these runs so superbly as the free horse of the plains.

And here, in the case of education, shall man place the yoke upon man?

True, we say that social man is natural man yoked to society. But if we give a comprehensive glance to the moral progress of society, we shall see that little by little, the yoke is being made easier, in other words, we shall see that nature, or life, moves gradually toward triumph. The yoke of the slave yields to that of the servant, and the yoke of the servant to that of the workman.

All forms of slavery tend little by little to weaken and disappear, even the sexual slavery of woman. The history of civilization is a history of conquest and of liberation. We should ask in what stage of civilization we find ourselves and if, in truth, the good of prizes and of punishments be necessary to our advancement. If we have indeed gone beyond this point, then to apply such a form of education would be to draw the new generation back to a lower level, not to lead them into their true heritage of progress.

Something very like this condition of the school exists in society, in the relation between the government and the great numbers of the men employed in its administrative departments. These clerks work day after day for the general national good, yet they do not feel or see the advantage of their work in any immediate reward.

That is, they do not realize that the state carries on its great business through their daily tasks, and that the whole nation is benefited by their work. For them the immediate good is promotion, as passing to a higher class is for the child in school. The man who loses sight of the really big aim of his work is like a child who has been placed in a class below his real standing: like a slave, he is cheated of something which is his right. His dignity as a man is reduced to the limits of the dignity of a machine which must be oiled if it is to be kept going, because it does not have within itself the impulse of life. All those petty things such as the desire for decorations or medals, are but artificial stimuli, lightening for the moment the dark, barren path in which he treads.

In the same way we give prizes to schoolchildren. And the fear of not achieving promotion, withholds the clerk from running away, and binds him to his monotonous work, even as the fear of not passing into the next class drives the pupil to his book. The reproof of the superior is in every way similar to the scolding of the teacher. The correction of badly executed clerical work is equivalent to the bad mark placed by the teacher upon the scholar's poor composition. The parallel is almost perfect.

But if the administrative departments are not carried on in a way which would seem suitable to a nation's greatness; if corruption too easily finds a place; it is the result of having extinguished the true greatness of man in the mind of the employee, and of having restricted his vision to those petty, immediate facts, which he has come to look upon as prizes and punishments. The country

stands, because the rectitude of the greater number of its employees is such that they resist the corruption of the prizes and punishments, and follow an irresistible current of honesty. Even as life in the social environment triumphs against every cause of poverty and death, and proceeds to new conquests, so the instinct of liberty conquers all obstacles, going from victory to victory.

It is this personal and yet universal force of life, a force often latent within the soul, that sends the world forward.

But he who accomplishes a truly human work, he who does something really great and victorious, is never spurred to his task by those trifling attractions called by the name of "prizes," nor by the fear of those petty ills which we call "punishments." If in a war a great army of giants should fight with no inspiration beyond the desire to win promotion, epaulets, or medals, or through fear of being shot, if these men were to oppose a handful of pygmies who were inflamed by love of country, the victory would go to the latter. When real heroism has died within an army, prizes and punishments cannot do more than finish the work of deterioration, bringing in corruption and cowardice.

All human victories, all human progress, stand upon the inner force.

Thus a young student may become a great doctor if he is spurred to his study by an interest which makes medicine his real vocation. But if he works in the hope of an inheritance, or of making a desirable marriage, or if indeed he is inspired by any

material advantage, he will never become a true master or a great doctor, and the world will never make one step forward because of his work. He to whom such stimuli are necessary, had far better never become a physician. Everyone has a special tendency, a special vocation, modest, perhaps, but certainly useful. The system of prizes may turn an individual aside from this vocation, may make him choose a false road, for him a vain one, and forced to follow it, the natural activity of a human being may be warped, lessened, even annihilated.

We repeat always that the world progresses and that we must urge men forward to obtain progress. But progress comes from the new things that are born, and these, not being foreseen, are not rewarded with prizes: rather, they often carry the leader to martyrdom.

We repeat always that the world *progresses* and that we must urge men forward to obtain progress. But progress comes from the *new things that are born*, and these, not being foreseen, are not rewarded with prizes: rather, they often carry the leader to martyrdom. God forbid that poems should ever be born of the desire to be crowned in the Capitol! Such a vision need only come into the heart of the poet and the muse will vanish. The poem

must spring from the soul of the poet, when he thinks neither of himself nor of the prize. And if he does win the laurel, he will feel the vanity of such a prize. The true reward lies in the revelation through the poem of his own triumphant inner force.

There does exist, however, an external prize for man; when, for example, the orator sees the faces of his listeners change with the emotions he has awakened, he experiences something so great that it can only be likened to the intense joy with which one discovers that he is loved. Our joy is to touch, and conquer souls, and this is the one prize which can bring us a true compensation.

Sometimes there is given to us a moment when we fancy ourselves to be among the great ones of the world. These are moments of happiness given to man that he may continue his existence in peace. It may be through love attained or because of the gift of a son, through a glorious discovery or the publication of a book; in some such moment we feel that there exists no man who is above us. If, in such a moment, someone vested with authority comes forward to offer us a medal or a prize, he is the important destroyer of our real reward — “And who are you?” our vanished illusion shall cry, “Who are you that recalls me to the fact that I am not the first among men? Who stands so far above me that he may give me a prize?” The prize of such a man in such a moment can only be Divine.

As for punishments, the soul of the normal man grows perfect through expanding, and punishment as commonly understood is always a form of *repression*. It may bring results with those inferior

natures who grow in evil, but these are very few, and social progress is not affected by them. The penal code threatens us with punishment if we are dishonest within the limits indicated by the laws. But we are not honest through fear of the laws; if we do not rob, if we do not kill, it is because we love peace, because the natural trend of our lives leads us forward, leading us ever farther and more definitely away from the peril of low and evil acts.

Without going into the ethical or metaphysical aspects of the question, we may safely affirm that the delinquent before he transgresses the law, has, *if he knows of the existence of a punishment*, felt the threatening weight of the criminal code upon him. He has defied it, or he has been lured into the crime, deluding himself with the idea that he would be able to avoid the punishment of the law. But there has occurred within his mind, *a struggle between the crime and the punishment*. Whether it be efficacious in hindering crime or not, this penal code is undoubtedly made for a very limited class of individuals; namely, criminals. The enormous majority of citizens are honest without any regard what ever to the threats of the law.

The real punishment of normal man is the loss of the consciousness of that individual power and greatness which are the sources of his inner life. Such a punishment often falls upon men in the fullness of success. A man whom we would consider crowned by happiness and fortune may be suffering from this form of punishment. Far too often man does not see the real punishment which threatens him.

And it is just here that education may help.

Today we hold the pupils in school, restricted by those instruments so degrading to body and spirit, the desk — and material prizes and punishments. Our aim in all this is to reduce them to the discipline of immobility and silence, — to lead them, — where? Far too often toward no definite end.

Often the education of children consists in pouring into their intelligence the intellectual contents of school programs. And often these programs have been compiled in the official department of education, and their use is imposed by law upon the teacher and the child.

Ah, before such dense and willful disregard of the life which is growing within these children, we should hide our heads in shame and cover our guilty faces with our hands!

Sergi³ says truly: “Today an urgent need imposes itself upon society: the reconstruction of methods in education and instruction, and he who fights for this cause, fights for human regeneration.”

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. Why does Montessori emphasize love of the child in regard to scientific pedagogy?
2. What is the point of the reference to Jesus in [paragraph 3](#)?

3. How effective, in terms of argument, is the comparison of the pinned butterflies with the children penned in by their desks? Is the comparison valid?
4. Why is there so much emphasis on the example of the desks and chairs that have been scientifically provided for schoolchildren?
5. What does it mean to study the pupils before educating them?
6. Montessori says the principle of slavery still pervades pedagogy. Is that true even today?
7. Comment on Montessori's use of irony in [paragraph 19](#).
8. How does Montessori connect the educational environment of the child with the working environment of the adult?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. In [paragraph 3](#) Montessori asserts, "From the child itself he will learn how to perfect himself as an educator." In practical terms, how useful do you think this statement is in teaching preschool children? How valuable would it be in teaching children in the early grades? Is it less valuable or more valuable in teaching college students?
2. If you have had experience in a Montessori school, describe the ways in which learning occurred. Review your own experience and compare it with the principles that Montessori outlines in her selection. How many of her values were present in the school you attended? How effective was that early education for you? Did you feel that your inner spirit was developed as you learned?
3. Montessori states, "The school must permit the *free, natural manifestations* of the *child* if in the school scientific pedagogy is to be born" ([para. 7](#)). In terms of your experience, do you feel this statement is valid? How can scientific pedagogy be put into effect while also educating the child? What conditions need to be met?

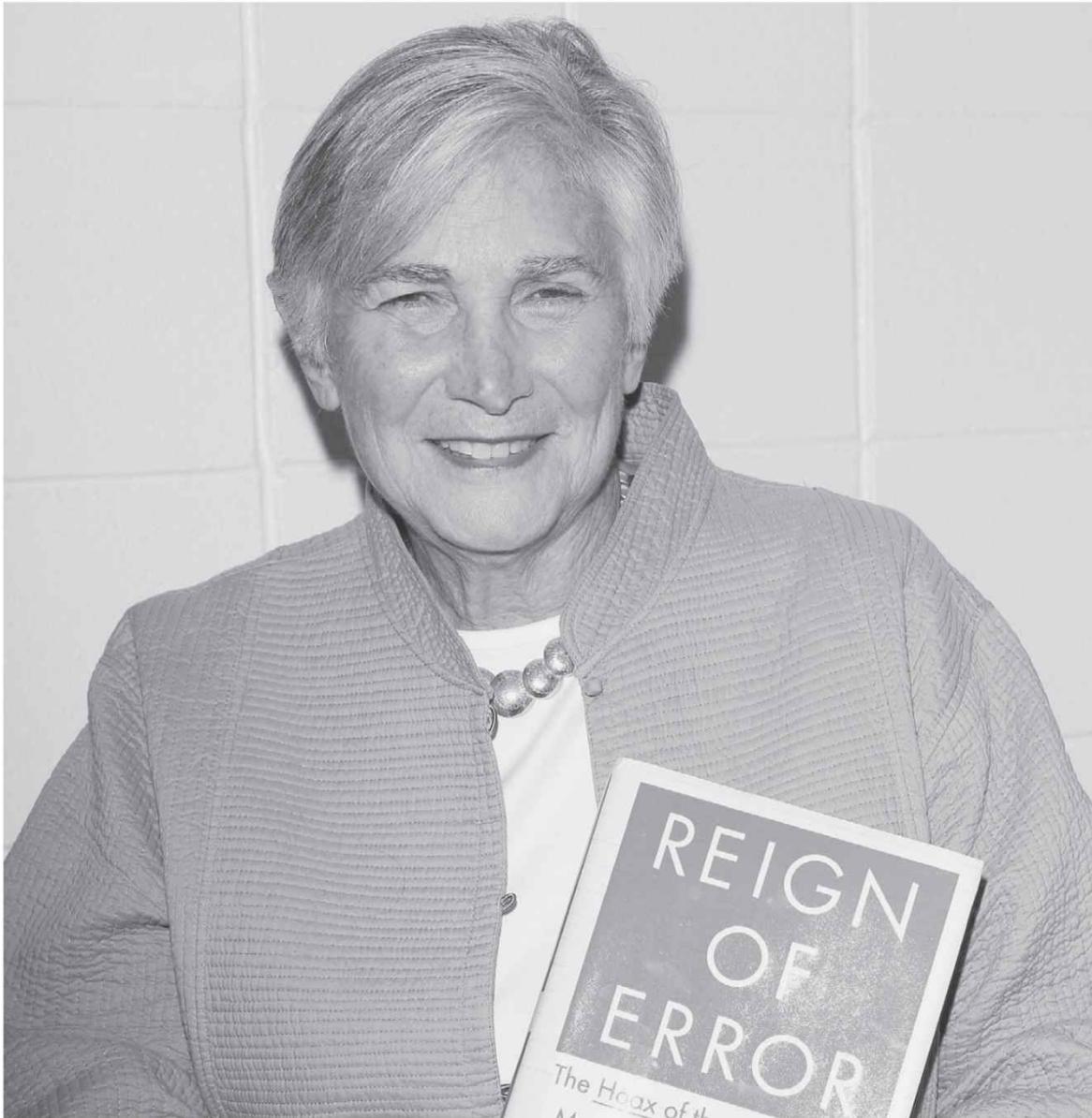
4. Beginning in [paragraph 24](#), Montessori writes extensively about school prizes and punishments. Examine her argument and either defend it on the basis of your observations, or attack it. Explain what the nature of her argument is and how it applies to the education of the child as Montessori understands it. What is your view on the usefulness of prizes and punishments in the education of children?
5. Montessori's great experiment took place in the San Lorenzo quarter of Rome, one of the toughest slums in the city. It was being rebuilt when Montessori got the opportunity to construct her "Children's House." Do some research on *Casa dei Bambini* and write an essay that clarifies exactly what she did there and what kind of results she eventually got. How successful was her experiment? What criticisms of the experiment seem valid to you?
6. Montessori states, "Everyone has a special tendency, a special vocation, modest, perhaps, but certainly useful" ([para. 35](#)). Explain what this statement means. Do you see evidence for Montessori's assertion in your friends? In yourself? Why is her statement important to consider in the education of a child? How has your education affected your sense of vocation?

CONNECTIONS

1. Montessori and [Ravitch](#) agree on several points. What are those points? How complete is their agreement? What are the principal issues on which they seem either to disagree or ignore one another? What basic values most importantly connect their views on education?
2. To what extent is the "education" of [Frederick Douglass](#) evidence that Montessori's theories are sound? What does he do that validates her ideas concerning slavery and freedom? Consider Douglass's - narrative of how he learned to read when he was a child. How were the conditions under which he learned similar to those Montessori describes?



Diane Ravitch *The Essentials of a Good Education*



Michael Tran/FilmMagic/Getty Images

DIANE RAVITCH (b. 1938), a historian of education, was assistant secretary of education during the presidency of George H. W. Bush and served during the administration of Bill Clinton. She was educated at Wellesley College and went on for her Ph.D. at Columbia University. She worked as an editorial assistant for

The New Leader magazine, which was founded by Eugene V. Debs (1855–1928), who ran for president on the Socialist ticket five times and who promoted the development of trade unions. *The New Leader's* content was political, with a strong concern for social justice. Ravitch's issues have centered on education, but she has also focused on social welfare, justice, and the promotion of opportunity. She is currently a research professor at New York University.

Ravitch has written eleven books. One of her early works, *The Great School Wars: New York City, 1805–1973* (1974), is a history of New York's public schools. Her focus became political early on, stimulated by the teachers' strike of 1968. She begins her study by explaining that the general understanding had been that the public schools had Americanized waves of immigrants and paved the way into the middle class for generation after generation. Then, in the 1820s some public funds went to Catholic schools, especially when the Irish immigrants began to arrive. This funding was controversial and stimulated the first "war" over the schools. The second "war" was in the 1890s over the immigration of Italians and Greeks. The schools had to deal with underfunding and language issues. Much the same was true in the next wave of immigration in 1910 and 1920. But the most difficult of these "wars" began in the late 1940s when New York schools absorbed - immigrants from Puerto Rico and African Americans emigrating from the South, confronting intersecting issues of class, racial, and linguistic prejudice.

Each time these waves of immigration began to reshape the public schools politicians reacted differently, usually threatening cuts, but also demanding that the schools do more to elevate these immigrants into the image of the middle class prevalent at the time. For example, the fact that African American graduation rates in the 1960s were lower than those of white students caused politicians to blame the schools and point to their successes with other immigrants. Ravitch countered that immigrants of any race could be successful due to schools alone, but that their families and their communities made much more of a difference in their rise to middle class status. Therefore, obstacles to African American success such as prejudice, recent segregation, and inequality could not be expected to be solved in school. Her book, detailed and data driven, helped defend teachers against politicians who wanted to chasten them and public schools in general.

The months-long New York teachers strike of 1968 was a reaction to decisions made in Brownsville, a largely black and Puerto Rican neighborhood that had transitioned from being largely Jewish. Using the recently installed local control of schools, Brownsville fired a large number of white teachers. The Teachers Union reacted by going on strike until the teachers were reinstated, but in this incident the ultimate goal of racial integration was never reached. Despite the rocky events she recounts, Ravitch's history of the city's schools was helpful in improving political attitudes toward them.

Because of threats to the curriculum in public schools in which the arts and humanities were being reduced or in some cases eliminated, Ravitch published many books in the 1980s trying to forestall changes that she felt would diminish children's education. *Against Mediocrity: The Humanities in America's High Schools* (1984), *Challenges to the Humanities* (1985), *The Schools We Deserve* (1985), and *The Troubled Crusade: American Education, 1945–1980* all address the question of what should be taught in the public schools.

Ravitch became known first as a supporter of a version of the Common Core, which is a proposal that calls for all students to learn a central range of material at specific grade levels. But eventually, seeing the program in action, she has come around to the view that, while it is good to have standards in education, it is not good to have public education driven by aggressive testing. She opposed evaluating teachers on how well their students tested, just as she opposed teaching to the tests instead of teaching to the student. She has pointed out that the Common Core has failed in raising math or reading scores in almost all the schools involved in the program.

Today Ravitch is opposed to the privatization of public schools. While charter schools have been developed in many parts of the country — for instance, Rahm Emanuel, then mayor of Chicago, closed 50 public schools in one day to create charter alternatives — Ravitch sees this as a means of draining funds from the public sector. And while some experts have felt charter schools work,

she complains of the damage they do to public education in general.

Her recent book, *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools* (2013), from which this chapter is taken, centers on the question of whether charter schools will further divide the country by race and class. Will the charter schools serve only highly motivated students, while the unmotivated or disadvantaged students will be left behind in public school? Will the privileged be served, and the rest ignored? These issues, she claims, are not being addressed by the federal agency responsible for promoting good education.

RAVITCH'S RHETORIC

Ravitch uses a simple rhetorical style designed to communicate not only with parents, but students as well. She avoids data, schematics, and any kind of technical language that might slow the reader. In addition, she uses one distinct feature that we do not find in most of the authors in this book: one-sentence paragraphs that offer a moment's pause and reflection. Some, such as [paragraph 3](#), seem to be a continuation of what went before, but [paragraph 14](#), "What does this mean for schooling?" clearly looks forward, and is a rhetorical question that does not address the reader so much as set up the subject of the next paragraphs. Her one-sentence [paragraph 16](#), "Basic skills are necessary, but they are not enough to prepare the citizen," acts as a virtual thesis statement that will be developed in the remaining section of the essay. This is a powerful declarative sentence that

needs clarification and expansion because it states a position that must be defended.

Her subsequent paragraphs take important issues almost one at a time. [Paragraph 17](#) expresses the need for a citizen to be able to read critically so as to judge evidence in elections and on juries. In [paragraph 18](#) she points to events in recent American history, such as Jim Crow laws, Prohibition, the Great Depression, the Cold War, and more. She devotes paragraphs to the study of the Constitution, government, and science, and [paragraph 22](#) to rhetoric, the art of persuasion, which she feels students must study. She adds a paragraph on languages, then later the arts and physical activity.

She also spends time talking about the demands that educated and concerned parents make upon the schools. Affluent parents often send their children to private schools, some of which she names, which are notable for promoting the arts, music, drama, and other social activities that cannot be sustained in a public school burdened by constant standardized testing. Ravitch focuses on the parts of the curriculum that promote creativity and a rounded education. Her essay is intended to persuade and constitutes a careful argument that she hopes will convince policy makers to think more clearly about what they are doing with testing in the schools. While she does not say it directly, it is obvious that the emphasis on testing in our schools has resulted from the comparison of our students' test scores with students from China, Europe, and elsewhere. Because our students test lower, policy makers feel our students cannot compete globally.

Yet, people from all over the world want to come to the United States for its schools and the chance for a good education.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Diane Ravitch's "The Essentials of a Good Education." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What is standardized testing?
2. Why does Ravitch feel standardized testing is inadequate and even harmful?
3. What does Ravitch recommend in her curriculum?

The Essentials of a Good Education

SOLUTION NO.3 *Every school should have a full, balanced, and rich curriculum, including the arts, science, history, literature, civics, geography, foreign languages, mathematics, and physical education.*

Since the advent of No Child Left Behind,¹ many schools have cut back on every subject that was not tested. The federal law demanded that all students be proficient in mathematics and reading by 2014, and every state was required to test those subjects. Nothing counted other than mathematics and reading. Schools expanded the time available to teach these subjects, which determined whether they would be honored or humiliated, whether they would live or die. More time was allotted to take practice tests in mathematics and reading. Because there are only so many hours in a day, there was less time for subjects that were not tested. When the economic recession of 2008 began, many schools experienced budget cuts. The combination of budget cuts and high-stakes testing meant that something had to go. When cutbacks were necessary, it was in the nontested subjects. When teachers were laid off, they were usually those who did not teach the tested subjects.

Our policy makers today think that what matters most is getting high test scores in reading and mathematics. They don't show any regrets if a school spends inordinate amounts of time and money on test preparation materials. They will pin an A label on a school that gets high scores, even if its students spend all day every day

practicing to take tests in mathematics and reading. But such a school is really not a good school, even if it gets high scores and the state awards it an A.

So we must look for other indicators, not just test scores, and not the official grade offered by the state or the district, which is unduly tied to test scores.

Let us consider two other ways of evaluating schools. One is to ask what the most demanding families seek in a school. The other is to consider the school in relation to the purposes of public education.

What do the most demanding families seek in a school? Whether they are parents in an affluent suburb or parents whose children attend an expensive private school, they expect their children to have much, much more than training in basic skills. They expect their children to study history and literature, science and mathematics, the arts and foreign languages. They would never tolerate a school that did not have dramatics, art, music, and science laboratories. They would insist that the school have up-to-date technology that their children could use every day. They would expect excellent athletic facilities and daily physical education. If their child is unusually bright, they would expect advanced courses to keep her curiosity and zest for learning alive. If their child has disabilities of any kind, they would expect the school to have appropriately trained personnel to offer the help and support the child needs. They would correctly anticipate small classes, projects, and frequent writing assignments. They would

want a full range of student activities, including student government, a newspaper, clubs, after-school activities, and plays.

In affluent communities today, such schools are the norm in the public sector, not just the private sector. They were once the norm in ordinary American public schools. Today, however, the No Child Left Behind law and the Race to the Top program have undermined this ideal curriculum and restricted it to only the most affluent communities. Because federal policies value only test scores, they have unleashed an almost fanatical obsession with data based on test scores. Today, almost every state has received federal funding to create a data “warehouse,” where information about all students and teachers will be stored for future retrieval. What is the purpose of the data warehouse? No one knows for sure, but it will enable all students to be tracked throughout their lifetimes in relation to their test scores, graduation dates, future earnings, and who knows what else. Even now, the Gates Foundation and Rupert Murdoch’s Amplify division² have joined to create a \$100 million database called In Bloom to collect confidential student information from several states and districts and put it on an electronic “cloud” managed by [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). This data will include students’ names, birthdates, addresses, social security numbers, grades, test scores, disability status, attendance, and other confidential information. The database may be made available to vendors for marketing purposes. Why the modern state should collect and share so much confidential information about its citizens is baffling.

In contrast to federal policy, which is obsessed with test-based data, educated consumers of schooling want their children to have a full, balanced, and rich curriculum. They may look into outcome data about a school (for example, how many of its students graduate, how many go to college, which colleges admit its graduates), but their first concern is “inputs”: What educational experiences will my child have? How experienced are the teachers? How small are classes? Are there a variety of athletic programs that are right for my child? Will my child have a broad curriculum? If she needs extra help, will she get it? Does the school have a warm and welcoming climate? Will this school take good care of my child?

An educated parent would not accept a school where many weeks of every school year were spent preparing for state tests. An educated parent would not tolerate a school that cut back or eliminated the arts to spend more time preparing for state tests. If you want to know what an educated parent-consumer would insist upon, go online and look at the curricula in schools such as Sidwell Friends in the District of Columbia; Lakeside School in Seattle; Deerfield Academy in Deerfield, Massachusetts; Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts; and Maumee Valley Country Day School in Toledo, Ohio. Every one of these schools has a curriculum with extensive offerings in the arts, languages, world cultures, history, sciences, mathematics, and athletics.

A similar curriculum may be found in affluent suburban communities, richly endowed by their strong tax bases and committed parents. Families in communities like Plano, Texas,

Deerfield, Illinois, and Scarsdale, New York, would accept nothing less for their children.

The typical public school today cannot afford the same offerings. It cannot afford the small classes and rich curriculum available only to the richest citizens. And yet I can personally attest that in the past American public schools routinely offered a varied curriculum, even if the class sizes were not 1:15 as they are in many elite private schools. Why today are public schools unable to afford the curriculum they once offered? Why is the richest nation in the world unable to provide a full curriculum for all students in public schools? Why are budget cuts in the wake of the Great Recession of 2008 falling so heavily on the public schools? Why are states willing to spend hundreds of millions on testing and test preparation materials even as they cut back on teachers of the arts and foreign languages and on librarians and counselors?

We cannot provide equal educational opportunity if some children get access to a full and balanced curriculum while others get a heavy dose of basic skills. This is one instance where no research is needed. The fact of inequality is undeniable, self-evident, and unjustifiable. This inequality of opportunity may damage the hearts and minds of the children who are shortchanged in ways that may never be undone.

The essential purpose of the public schools, the reason they receive public funding, is to

teach young people the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

We know that those who can afford the best for their children demand a full curriculum. Another way to judge the importance of a high-value curriculum is to consider what it should be in light of the purposes of public education. Communities and states established public education as a public responsibility in the nineteenth century to educate future citizens and to sustain our democracy. The essential purpose of the public schools, the reason they receive public funding, is to teach young people the rights and responsibilities of citizens. As citizens, they will be expected to discuss and deliberate issues, to choose our leaders, to take an active role in their communities, and to participate in civic affairs. A secondary purpose was to strengthen our economy and our culture by raising the intelligence of our people and preparing them to lead independent lives as managers, workers, producers, consumers, and creators of ideas, products, and services. A third purpose is to endow every individual with the intellectual and ethical power to pursue his or her own interests and to develop the judgment and character to survive life's vicissitudes.

Today, policy makers think of education solely in terms of its secondary purposes. They speak of children as future global competitors. They sometimes refer to children in rather ugly terms as "human assets," forgetting that they are unique people and

they are not fungible.³ They want all students to be “college and career ready.” They tend to speak only of preparation for the workforce, not education for citizenship. But this is misguided. Workforce training may take place in schools; it may take place in the workplace. It is not unimportant. Nor is college preparation unimportant. But getting ready for college is not the central purpose of education. Nor is workforce training. The central purpose of education is to prepare everyone to assume the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a democracy.

What does this mean for schooling?

It means first of all that all citizens need the essential tools of learning, which are reading and mathematics. Knowing how to read and knowing how numbers are used (and misused) to characterize almost everything are basic necessities for citizens.

Basic skills are necessary, but they are not enough to prepare the citizen.

A citizen of a democratic society must be able to read critically, listen carefully, evaluate competing claims, weigh evidence, and come to a thoughtful judgment. In their hands will be the most important responsibilities of citizenship: choosing our leaders and serving on juries. One determines the fate of our nation and the other determines the fate of other humans.

To come to a thoughtful judgment about political affairs, citizens need a solid grounding in history, economics, and statistics. They

will hear candidates make conflicting claims about what history proves and what the economy needs. Citizens need to understand the great issues in American and world history. They should know about Jim Crow,⁴ the Progressive movement, Prohibition, the Great Depression, the McCarthy era, the *Brown* decision, the Cold War, and the other events and issues that shaped our world today. They need to understand the measures that have helped or harmed the economy. They need to recognize how conflicts have started and ended. They need to know and understand enough to reach their own judgments about candidates and issues and proposed legislation.

To know the evil and the goodness of which men are capable, they must study history. To know the mechanisms that have been created to protect our rights and freedoms, they must study the Constitution and other founding documents. To learn about the many struggles that others have waged to improve our imperfect democracy, they must study history.

To be prepared for their weighty responsibilities, they need to study government, economics, and civics. These studies teach them how their society functions and how it may be changed. To be prepared to judge issues on the world scene, they need to study world history and world geography to learn about other forms of government and other ways of organizing society than the one that is most familiar to us.

As citizens, our students will be expected to come to judgments about complex scientific issues. They need to understand science

and to bring their critical judgment to bear on questions such as global warming, cloning, evolution, the effects of smoking or sugar, regulation of drilling for natural gas and oil, and debates about maintaining clean air and clean water. As candidates debate these issues, voters must be informed and ready to make their own judgments. They must know how to research the issues and assess contesting claims. As advocates for industry advance their interests, citizens must be able to weigh their assertions. Their knowledge of science and their understanding of scientific method will prepare them to reach their own judgments in matters of public dispute.

As citizens, our students will be called upon to judge the character of those who seek to persuade them. They will need that judgment when casting a vote, when serving on a jury, when deciding whom to trust. They will gain insight into character through the study of literature. By reading good and great works of fiction, students learn about character, motivation, kindness, greatness of spirit, imagination, the depths of evil, chicanery, and other aspects of human nature. Literature provides students with the opportunity to experience life through the eyes of other people in other times and other places. Literature, like history, is a superb way to travel through time, to be transported into another world. A good education steps outside the world of textbooks and work sheets and introduces students to worlds that they never dreamed of and to ideas that change their way of thinking. It introduces them to authors who use language imaginatively and beautifully and to cultural experiences that they can enjoy and share.

To function effectively in the world of the twenty-first century, students should learn a foreign language. They should use their language skills to learn about the culture, literature, history, and arts of other societies. They should broaden their knowledge of the world so that they recognize that other people think differently; by doing so, they may abandon narrow provincialism and get a clearer understanding of other cultures.

All of these studies are important parts of a rich and balanced curriculum. They may be taught separately, or they may be taught as integrated studies of society. There is no single right way. Teachers are best equipped to judge how to teach, how to inspire young minds with a thirst to learn more.

None of these studies should be subject to budget cuts. They are fundamental ingredients of a liberal education.

All are enriched and enhanced by the arts. The arts are essential for everyone. Life is enhanced by the arts. No student should be denied the opportunity to participate in the arts or to learn about the arts as practiced here and in other cultures. All students should have the chance to sing, dance, draw, and paint in school. They should have the resources for video production and for chorus, band, orchestra, and dramatics. The arts are a source of joy, a means of self-expression and group expression. To master a musical instrument or to participate in choral music requires self-discipline and practice; no one can do it for you. Every school should have the resources to enable students to express their individuality or to take pleasure in joyful communal activity.

The ancients spoke of a healthy mind in a healthy body, and in our time we have forgotten the wisdom of that maxim. Children and adolescents need physical activity. They need recess during the day, to relax and run and shout and play. They need structured play and games where they can learn physical discipline, whether in gymnastics or sports. Their youthful energy should be channeled into track and field, basketball, cycling, swimming, volleyball, and other activities.

School provides a place for mental, physical, and ethical development. Character is taught and learned in many settings: in the classroom, in the hallways, in the lunchroom, and on the sports field. One of the reasons that online schools do not succeed is that children and youths need social interaction to develop the soft skills that are needed in life and work. They must learn the skills of democratic society, the give-and-take of participation in shared activities. They learn together to put on a play, to organize a game, to collaborate on a science project or a mock trial. All of these activities prepare them for life in ways unmeasured by standardized tests. These skills of interaction cannot be learned on a computer. They are learned together with others in shared tasks.

For the past two decades, even before No Child Left Behind, the U.S. educational system has had an unhealthy focus on testing and accountability — unhealthy because it has driven public policy to concentrate on standardized tests of uneven quality at the expense of the more important goals of education, like character and love of learning. Sadly, the growing obsession with data has

shoved aside these important goals. Consequently, children are tested again and again, compelled to select a box on a multiple-choice test, which is then turned into a definitive judgment about their value and their intelligence. Today, we accord to standardized test scores the same power that was once granted to intelligence tests. They are taken to be a measure of the worth of boys and girls and ultimately a measure of their teachers as well.

Anyone who truly cares about children must be repelled by the insistence on ranking them, rating them, and labeling them. Whatever the tests measure is not the sum and substance of any child. The tests do not measure character, spirit, heart, soul, potential. When overused and misused, when attached to high stakes, the tests stifle the very creativity and ingenuity that our society needs most. Creativity and ingenuity stubbornly resist standardization. Tests should be used sparingly to help students and teachers, not to allocate rewards and punishments and not to label children and adults by their scores.

We cheat children when we do not give them the chance to learn more than basic skills. We cheat them when we evaluate them by standardized tests. We undervalue them when we turn them into data points.

If we mean to educate them, we must recognize that all children deserve a full liberal arts curriculum. All children need the chance to develop their individual talents. And all need the opportunity to learn the skills of working and playing and singing with others.

Whatever the careers of the twenty-first century may be, they are likely to require creativity, thoughtfulness, and the capacity for social interaction and personal initiative, not simply routine skills. All children need to be prepared as citizens to participate in a democratic society. A democratic society cannot afford to limit the skills and knowledge of a liberal education only to children of privilege and good fortune.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. How do standardized tests limit student opportunities?
2. What do standardized tests test for?
3. How does a strong tax base affect local schools?
4. What do most educated and demanding parents want for their children?
5. What is the original purpose of public education?
6. Of what value are programs in the arts, music, and physical activities?
7. What does Ravitch say is the purpose of public education?

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. When policy makers decide that public education is designed to prepare students for the workplace rather than for the responsibilities of citizenship, what do you foresee as the ultimate results? What do you see as the final results of a testing program of the kind that Ravitch describes? Did you undergo such a testing program? Do you feel it has prepared you well for the future?

2. In [paragraph 18](#) Ravitch lists a number of historical issues that she feels the public schools should prepare students to know and understand. Did your education prepare you to know enough about these issues to make you feel confident that you can discuss them with others? Write an essay explaining to someone who does not know what these issues are why they are important and why students should learn about them in school. Why should we know our own history?
3. Ravitch includes the study of a foreign language as necessary in a good curriculum. Do you agree with her? In a persuasive essay, attack or defend her position on the need for public school students to study a foreign language. If you have studied a foreign language, explain what you feel the benefit has been. If you have not studied a foreign language, explain why not. What might be the intellectual benefit of studying a different language? Is there any downside to such study?
4. In [paragraph 8](#) Ravitch lists a number of schools that have the kind of curriculum that she approves and that she says is demanded by an “educated parent.” She suggests going online and checking out the curriculum of one or more of them. Do so — look up one of the schools and find out what courses they teach and what requirements they have. If necessary, ask for a catalog or course description. Compare the program you discover with the program you remember from your own school. What are the differences and similarities? Was your education compromised by spending an excessive amount of time on testing?
5. Look up the Common Core requirements for standards in education. What are they? Do you feel they are as problematic as Ravitch does? These requirements are controversial, and many educators support them. Do you? Were you taught the Common Core? If so, do you feel your experience was positive or negative? Did the Common Core limit your experiences in school, or do you feel it expanded your educational horizon? If you did not experience the Common Core curriculum, do you, after reviewing its requirements, wish you had?

6. Ravitch is opposed to charter schools and privatization for a number of reasons. If you have studied at a charter school, write an essay that explains the positive features of the education you received. Would you recommend a charter school to other students? Ravitch feels that charter schools will attract all the high achievers and leave the public schools full of underachievers, which may ultimately harm them. Do you think this is true? What in your experience might help decide the question one way or another?

CONNECTIONS

1. Howard Gardner, in his essay [*A Rounded Version: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*](#), talks about the various kinds of intelligence that young people display. What are those intelligences, and how well would they be served by the Common Core curriculum and by standardized testing? Would Gardner agree with Ravitch about the value of charter schools? Would he agree with her about the curriculum that an “educated parent” would demand for a child? In a brief essay, find the common ground that these educators have and find, also, their disagreements. Where do you stand on the questions they raise?
2. Diane Ravitch does not talk extensively about the public schools’ mission to prepare students for the workplace — except to say that preparing for good citizenship comes first. How would Robert Reich respond to Ravitch’s argument? He mentions the routine worker, just as she does, but he also mentions the symbolic analyst, as she does not. Or does she? Is the schooling in literature, music, and the arts not schooling in symbolic analysis? In an essay that takes into account their views on education and work, decide what they have to teach one another in terms of public education. What does Reich provide that will strengthen Ravitch’s argument? Likewise, how does Ravitch’s argument against standardized testing reinforce the main principles of Reich’s argument? How does reading these two essays help you better understand the purposes of your own education?



Marilynne Robinson *What Are We Doing Here?*



Ulf Andersen/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images

RAISED IN Idaho where her father worked in the timber business, Marilynne Robinson (b. 1943) went to Pembroke College of Brown University for her undergraduate degree. She earned her Ph.D. in English at the University of Washington and went on to be a professor of English and Creative Writing at the Iowa Writers'

Workshop. A visiting professor at Amherst College and at the University of Kent, among others, she has been awarded several honorary degrees, including ones from Yale and Brown. She has also been elected fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Robinson is known for a strong interest in religion and religious thought, having lectured on American Puritanism and the writings of John Calvin.

Robinson is a best-selling author. Her first novel, *Housekeeping* (1980), nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, is set in the remote town of Fingerbone, Idaho, and is about two orphaned sisters who are looked after by a transient aunt, Sylvie. The portrait of this unusual family underscores Robinson's own views that family must cleave together no matter what. Her second novel, *Gilead* (2004), won the Pulitzer Prize. President Barack Obama at one point said that it was his favorite novel and that it changed him in important ways. *Gilead*, set in Iowa and centering on the life of a preacher, John Ames, who narrates the novel, is the first of a trilogy including *Home* (2008) and *Lila* (2014).

In addition to writing fiction, Robinson has published several collections of essays. *The Death of Adam: Essays on Modern Thought* (1998) is a revisionist book with essays designed to critique cynicism and to respect facts rather than popular opinions based on assumptions instead of genuine knowledge. In this collection she asserts that the prevailing view of things may be wrong, and she offers discussions and analyses of ideas such as Darwinism, the family, the wilderness, Psalm 8, and more. Two essays examine the life of Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549), a

religious French intellectual humanist and author. Robinson followed this book with a range of serious examinations in *Absence of Mind: The Dispelling of Inwardness from the Modern Myth of the Self* (2010), *When I Was a Child I Read Books: Essays* (2012), *The Givenness of Things: Essays* (2015), and *What Are We Doing Here?* (2018), from which the selection below comes. In her latest book of essays, she presents works that were given as lectures at both domestic and international institutions as disparate as Brigham Young University and Westminster Abbey. Her subjects include freedom of conscience, Ralph Waldo Emerson, the divine, and the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love.

ROBINSON'S RHETORIC

The essay “What Are We Doing Here?” was given as the annual public lecture at the Department of English at Liverpool Hope University in 2015. Her audience was academic and used to hearing formal lectures that assume familiarity with historical writers and with aspects of history relevant to the idea of sharing knowledge. As a result, this essay gives us the point of view of not just the student but the teacher who has the responsibility to provide an education in the humanities. Knowing that universities currently do not support the humanities well — as compared with their support of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics — Robinson begins her essay with a reminder that the positive qualities of our present culture can be traced to the 1500s, when the Renaissance rediscovered classical texts and introduced the ancient humanities to the West. The Renaissance

produced incredible wealth, art, and learning. Knowing this, she wonders why people no longer wish to promote and preserve the humanities. Rhetorically, in “What Are We Doing Here?”, Robinson presents less of an argument in favor of the humanities than a review of the role they have played in our culture. She is a subtle and gifted writer and uses a range of rhetorical strategies. She begins with a rhetorical question which needs clarification. At first it seems like a big question pertaining to the meaning of life. She repeats it later, and its purpose becomes clearer and more relevant to what she believes English professors should be doing.

One of the most obvious distinctions of her rhetorical approach is the length of her paragraphs. Unlike journalists, who use shorter paragraphs intended to be easily skimmed, Robinson spreads out because she is lecturing. She makes a point and ruminates because she addresses an audience that hears her words and pays attention. The reader experiences the paragraphs as leisurely and expansive. Their meaning develops slowly, anticipating a significant point at the end.

Like many of the authors in this book, she introduces authorities whom she quotes to bolster her views, including John Milton, Alexis de Tocqueville, John Keats, and Walt Whitman, all names central to the humanities. Robinson is indirect in her defense of the humanities in education in part because her audience, English professors, already know that even in England, where Liverpool Hope University is, the pressure at universities is not specifically about education but about employability. Interestingly, she points out that the elite billionaires, who need special skilled labor to do

the work that keeps them wealthy, are happy to have their own children educated in universities that offer a good education in the humanities.

The one term that has a great deal of meaning for her is “competition.” In [paragraph 5](#) Robinson says that the United States “is always in an existential struggle with an imagined competitor.” It may have been nineteenth-century nationalism contrasting with our debt to the culture and wealth of Europe, or it may have been the Cold War against the Soviet Union. Today — although she does not say so until almost the end of the essay — the competition is with China and Russia, whose cultures we have little encouragement to appreciate. Because the United States perceives itself possibly losing in the competition, the need has arisen in universities and colleges to produce the skilled workers who can fill the as yet undefined requirements of the elite managers and policy makers who care less about the fullness of the citizen’s education than about training the worker for the factories and offices of the future.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Marilynne Robinson’s “What Are We Doing Here?” Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What are the humanities?
2. How does competition affect the purposes of contemporary education?
3. Why are the humanities being neglected in public universities?



What Are We Doing Here?

The Liverpool Hope Hopkins Lecture, an Annual Public Lecture, Hosted by the Department of English at Liverpool Hope University: July 20, 2015

I have been reading lately about the rise of humanism in Europe and Britain. The old scholars often described themselves as “ravished” by one of the books newly made available to them by the press, perhaps also by translation. Their lives were usually short, never comfortable. I think what it would have been like to read by the light of an oil lamp, to write with a goose quill. It used to seem to me that an unimaginable self-discipline must account for their meticulous learnedness. I assumed that the rigors and austerities of their early training had made their discomforts too familiar to be noticed. Now increasingly I think they were held to their work by a degree of fascination, of sober delight, that we can no longer imagine. John Milton said, As well kill a man as kill a good book.¹ He was arguing, unsuccessfully, against licensing, the suppression or censoring of books before publication. This was usual in the premodern and early modern world, of course. How many good books were killed outright by these means we will never know, even granting the labors of printers who defied the threat of hair-raising punishments to publish unlicensed work, and which others risked hair-raising penalties to own or to read. To put books into English, the vulgar tongue, the language of the masses, was once radical. Teaching literature written in English is a recent innovation, historically speaking, and was long regarded in the more renowned institutions as a lowering of standards. It is

still the case in some countries that the work of living writers is excluded from the curriculum, perhaps a sign of lingering prejudice against the vernacular, against what people say and think now, in the always disparaged present. In America this scruple is gone and forgotten. Writers not yet dead, in many cases only emerging, are read and pondered, usually under a rubric of some kind that makes them representative of gender or ethnicity or region, therefore instances of some perspective or trend often of greater interest to the professor than to any of the writers. These categories, woman or black or immigrant, can be encumbrances from their point of view, obstacles to the reading of their work as something more than sociological data. If there are courses explicitly attentive to white men as a subgroup I have never heard of any. Male and white is still the default where literature is concerned, in the academy, at least. This is not the fault of any of these men, and they should not be undervalued or misread on this account. But knowing what a book costs any writer, in years not least, I hope for the day when all good books can be read as speaking in as broad a voice, engaged with the Great Questions. However, I am too aware of the ragged beast history has been to fret over the fact that its manners are not perfect yet. I think it is most excellent that so many voices are being heard, and that the ongoing life of this endless human work is acknowledged in real time. This has supported the teaching of writing that is so widespread in American universities. These same living writers come into the universities to lecture and teach, as the great literary figures whose writing is consecrated by time could not do, even if they wished. This is in effect a system of patronage that leaves no one beholden, and that makes

thousands of students aware that writers are not so unlike themselves, a valuable stimulus to aspiration.

All this works rather well. It has given me an interesting life, allowing me all the time a novel requires and every resource for following out the questions that arise as I work. I have enjoyed the company of young writers, and I have learned from them. I know that one is expected to bemoan the present time, to say something about decline and the loss of values. Oh tempora, o mores!² But I find a great deal to respect.

A society is moving toward dangerous ground when loyalty to the truth is seen as disloyalty to some supposedly higher interest. How many times has history taught us this?

That said. It is a familiar irony that prohibition and deprivation can make things potent and ravishing, and that plenty very often dulls our taste for them. There is a great deal of questioning now of the value of the humanities, those aptly named disciplines that make us consider what human beings have been, and are, and will be. Sometimes I think they should be renamed Big Data. These catastrophic wars that afflict so much of the world now surely bear more resemblance to the Hundred Years' War or the Thirty Years' War or the wars of Napoleon or the First World War than they do

to any expectations we have had about how history would unfold in the modern period, otherwise known as those few decades we call postwar. We have thought we were being cynical when we insisted that people universally are motivated by self-interest. Would God it were true! Hamlet's ruminations on the twenty thousand men going off to fight over a territory not large enough for them all to be buried in, going to their graves as if to their beds, shows a much sounder grasp of human behavior than this. It acknowledges a part of it that shows how absurdly optimistic our "cynicism" actually is. President Obama recently set off a kerfuffle among the press by saying that these firestorms of large-scale violence and destruction are not unique to Islamic culture or to the present time. This is simple fact, and it is also fair warning, if we hope to keep our own actions and reactions within something like civilized bounds. This would be one use of history. And here's another. We might stop persuading ourselves of the truth of notions that are flatly implausible in light of all we know, or could know if we cared to. Then we would be less confident in imposing our assumptions on behavior, including our own, that they cannot help us interpret. The aversion to history shelters some very important errors, and sometimes does so aggressively. A society is moving toward dangerous ground when loyalty to the truth is seen as disloyalty to some supposedly higher interest. How many times has history taught us this?

In the context of contemporary politics, someone who has a certain awareness of history, the president, for example, is expected to speak as if he did not. He is expected to have mastery of an artificial language, a language made up arbitrarily of

the terms and references of a nonexistent world that is conjured out of prejudice and nostalgia and misinformation, as well as of fashion and slovenliness among the opinion makers. Any dialect becomes second nature to those who live among its speakers, and this one is pervasive in ordinary educated life. Anyone who has wandered now and then into the vast arcana of what we have been and done is prone to violating the dialect's strict and narrow usage, and will be corrected. I am not speaking here of the usual and obvious malefactors, the blowhards on the radio and on cable television. I am speaking of the mainstream media, therefore of the institutions that educate most people of influence in America, including journalists. Our great universities, with their vast resources, their exhaustive libraries, look like a humanist's dream. Certainly, with the collecting and archiving that has taken place in them over centuries, they could tell us much that we need to know. But there is pressure on them now to change fundamentally, to equip our young to be what the Fabians³ used to call "brain workers." They are to be skilled labor in the new economy, intellectually nimble enough to meet its needs, which we know will change constantly and unpredictably. I may simply have described the robots that will be better suited to this kind of existence, and with whom our optimized workers will no doubt be forced to compete, poor complex and distractible creatures that they will be still.

Why teach the humanities? Why study them? American universities are literally shaped around them and have been since their founding, yet the question is put in the bluntest form: What are they good for? If, for purposes of discussion, we date the

beginning of the humanist movement to 1500, then historically speaking, the West has flourished materially as well as culturally in the period of their influence. You may have noticed that the United States is always in an existential struggle with an imagined competitor. It may have been the Cold War that instilled this habit in us. It may have been nineteenth-century nationalism, when America was coming of age and competition among the great powers of Europe drove world events. Whatever etiology⁴ is proposed for it, whatever excuse is made for it, however rhetorically useful it may be in certain contexts, the habit is deeply harmful, as it has been in Europe as well, when the competition involved the claiming and defending of colonies, as well as militarization that led to appalling war. The consequences of these things abide. We see and feel them every day. The standards that might seem to make societies commensurable are essentially meaningless, except when they are ominous. Insofar as we treat them as real, they mean that other considerations are put out of account. Who died in all those wars? The numbers lost assure us that there were artists and poets and mathematicians among them, and statesmen, though at best their circumstances may never have allowed them or us to realize their gifts. What was lost to those colonizations? The many regions of the world that bore the brunt of them struggle to discover a social order they can accept as legitimate and authoritative, with major consequences for the old colonizers and the whole world. Who loses in these economic competitions? Those who win, first of all, because the foot soldiers of those economies work too much for meager, even uncertain pay and are exposed to every insult this cheapening of fundamental value visits on the earth and the air. How many

artists and scientists ought there to be among those vast legions? And among their threatened children? There is a genius for impoverishment always at work in the world. And it has its way, as if its proceedings were not only necessary but even sensible. Its rationale, its battle cry, is Competition.

A great irony is at work in our historical moment. We are being encouraged to abandon our most distinctive heritage — in the name of self-preservation. The logic seems to go like this: To be as strong as we need to be we must have a highly efficient economy. Society must be disciplined, stripped down, to achieve this efficiency and to make us all better foot soldiers. The alternative is decadence, the eclipse of our civilization by one with more fire in its belly. We are to be prepared to think very badly of our antagonist, whichever one seems to loom at a given moment. It is a convention of modern literature, and of the going-on of talking heads and public intellectuals, to project what are said to be emerging trends into a future in which cultural, intellectual, moral, and economic decline will have hit bottom, more or less. Somehow this kind of talk always seems brave and deep. The specifics concerning this abysmal future are vague — Britain will cease to be Britain, America will cease to be America, France will cease to be France, and so on, depending which country happens to be the focus of Spenglerian⁵ gloom. The oldest literature of radical pessimism can be read as prophecy. Of course these three societies have changed profoundly in the last hundred years, the last fifty years, and few with any knowledge of history would admit to regretting the change. What is being invoked is the notion of a precious and unnameable essence, second nature to some, in the

marrow of their bones, in effect. By this view others, whether they will or no, cannot understand or value it, and therefore they are a threat. The definitions of *some* and *others* are unclear and shifting. In America, since we are an immigrant country, our “nativists” may be first- or second-generation Americans whose parents or grandparents were themselves considered suspect on these same grounds. It is almost as interesting as it is disheartening to learn that nativist rhetoric can have impact in a country where precious few can claim to be native in any ordinary sense. Our great experiment has yielded some valuable results, here a striking demonstration of the emptiness of such rhetoric, which is nevertheless loudly persistent in certain quarters in - America, and which obviously continues to be influential in Britain and Europe.

Nativism is always aligned with an impulse or strategy to shape the culture with which it claims to have this privileged intimacy. It is urgently intent on identifying enemies and confronting them, and it is hostile to the point of loathing toward aspects of the society that are taken to show their influence. In other words, these lovers of country, these patriots, are wildly unhappy with the country they claim to love and are bent on remaking it to suit their own preferences, which they feel no need to justify or even fully articulate. Neither do they feel any need to answer the objections of those who see their shaping and their disciplining as mutilation.

What is at stake now, in this rather inchoate⁶ cluster of anxieties that animates so many of us, is the body of learning and thought we call the humanities. Their transformative emergence has

historically specifiable origins in the English and European Renaissance, greatly expedited by the emergence of the printing press. At the time and for centuries afterward it amounted to very much more than the spread of knowledge, because it was understood as a powerful testimony to human capacities, human grandeur, the divine in the human. And it had the effect of awakening human capacities that would not otherwise have been imagined.

Alexis de Tocqueville,⁷ an early and classic interpreter of American civilization, published his great *Democracy in America*, in two volumes, in 1835 and 1840. He was interested in the new society for its implications for civilization in Europe, especially France. His treatment of it is equable and perceptive, though he does have his doubts. Speaking in his introduction of the effects of the spread of learning in the countries of the West, he says:

From the moment when the exercise of intelligence had become a source of strength and wealth, each step in the development of science, each new area of knowledge, each fresh idea had to be viewed as a seed of power placed within people's grasp. Poetry, eloquence, memory, the beauty of wit, the fires of imagination, the depth of thought, all these gifts which heaven shares out by chance turned to the advantage of democracy and, even when they belonged to the enemies of democracy, they still promoted its cause by highlighting the natural grandeur of man. Its victories spread, therefore, alongside those of civilization and education. Literature was an arsenal open to all, where the weak and the poor could always find arms.

This passage provides a sense of what became newly available to respect and admiration as knowledge spread through the

populace — poetry, eloquence, wit, imagination, depth of thought — where they would not have been seen or acknowledged in earlier generations. The old humanist joy in what people are still abides in Tocqueville, and he draws a humanist conclusion about the brilliance of people simply as such. Old Walt Whitman⁸ wrote, “I celebrate myself, and sing myself, / and what I assume you shall assume, / For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.” Any excellence, while it is given by heaven, more or less at random from the world’s perspective, is testimony to the fact that human beings are endowed with a capacity for excellence, whatever form it takes in any individual case. Their natural grandeur, which is overturning the old order, is not a matter of political or economic power, which, according to Tocqueville are a consequence of the emergence of these gifts and secondary to them. The splendor of the gifts themselves, as they are liberated by new areas of knowledge, by fresh ideas, makes the case for democracy.

It is to be noted that these gifts are highly individual. There is no talk here of the folk or the masses, though the transformation of society Tocqueville describes has potential for a radical, progressive overturning. There is no suggestion that those who are rising can or should be shaped or led toward participation in a benign new order foreseen either by them or for them. The social order is forming itself around change brought about by these individual expressions of a collective grandeur. Tocqueville sees something like inspiration sweeping through the West as knowledge spreads and science advances. Crucially, there is no mention of competition, no implication of a hierarchy of abilities or

gifts. Every excellence, every achievement enhances the general wealth of possibility for yet more excellence. And it is interesting to note that for Tocqueville there is no simple notion of utility. This awakening of minds and spirits is a sunlight that falls across the whole landscape of civilization. The questions being put to us now — What good are the humanities? Why are they at the center of our education? — might, for all history can tell us, be answered decisively by this vision of the effects of learning, which did take hold and flourish as the study of ancient poetry, philosophy and language, Scripture and theology, and of history itself by means of the printing press and the rise of vernacular languages, long before science and technology even began to come abreast of them.

Is Tocqueville describing something real? He stood at a place in the evolution of culture where there would be both a continuously new, because incremental, expansion of literacy and learning, and a vast population they had not yet touched. John Keats, briefly Tocqueville's contemporary, was moved by an Elizabethan translation of Homer: "Then felt I like some watcher of the skies / When a new planet swims into his ken."⁹ What was it that Keats took from this encounter? What "wild surmise"? Keats holds such a rarefied place in literature now that it is hard to believe he was once ridiculed as one of "the Cockney school of poetry." But his sonnet is expressing that old humanist privilege, of being "ravished" by a book, and of finding that it has a suggestive power far beyond its subject, a potency the affected mind itself might be years in realizing. I talked once with a cabdriver who had spent

years in prison. He said he had no idea that the world was something he could be interested in. And then he read a book.

In the history of the West, for all its achievements, there is also a persisting impatience with the energy and originality of the mind. It can make us very poor servants of purposes that are not our own.

In the history of the West, for all its achievements, there is also a persisting impatience with the energy and originality of the mind. It can make us very poor servants of purposes that are not our own. A Benthamite panopticon¹⁰ would have radically reduced the varieties of experience that help to individuate us, in theory producing happiness in factory workers by preventing their having even a glimpse of the fact that there could be more to life. Censorship, lists of prohibited books, restrictions on travel, limits on rights of assembly all accomplish by more practicable means some part of the same exclusions, precluding the stimulus of new thought, new things to wonder about. The contemporary assault on the humanities has something of the same objective and would employ similar methods. Workers, a category that seems to subsume us all except the idlest rich, should learn what they need to learn to be competitive in the new economy. All the rest is waste and distraction.

Competitive with whom? On what terms? To what end? With anyone whose vigor and good fortune allows them to prosper, apparently. With anyone who has done a clever thing we did not think of first. And will these competitors of ours be left to enjoy the miserable advantage of low wages and compromised health? And is there any particular reason to debase human life in order to produce more, faster, without reference to the worth of the product or to the value of the things sacrificed to its manufacture? Wouldn't most people, given an hour or two to reflect, consider this an intolerably trivial use to be put to, for them and their children? Life is brief and fragile, after all. Then what is this new economy whose demands we must always be ready to fill? We may assume it will be driven by innovation and by what are called market forces, which can be fads or speculation or chicanery. Oh, yes, rowdy old capitalism. Let it ply its music. Then again, in the all-consuming form proposed for it now, it is a little like those wars I mentioned earlier. It is equally inimical to poetry, eloquence, memory, the beauty of wit, the fires of imagination, the depth of thought. It is equally disinclined to reward gifts that cannot be turned to its uses. The urgency of war or crisis has been brought to bear on our civil institutions, which is to say, on the reserves and resources of civility we have created over many generations.

We in America are famous for our endless and costly election seasons. I think they are a good thing, all in all, even though as an Iowan I am subjected to the campaigning longer than most of my countrymen. There is a logic in exposing candidates to grueling scrutiny for months at a time. Once one of them is elected, he or she will have more control over public perceptions. But in the

adversarial environment of primaries and elections, things are revealed that are highly germane to the question of a candidate's suitability for the presidency, which is certainly the most intense and pressured office in the world. Many of the candidates make themselves ridiculous, providing valuable information to the electorate. The parties grope to discover what is possible, what is needed or desired. Or, notoriously, they offer themselves as agents of certain interests of friendly billionaires, which, we are to believe, align themselves nicely with the public interest. None of this is truer for the fact that it plays out in the press. We have no corner on foolish or mercenary politicians. But we do give ourselves a good long look at them, and weeding takes place. It is regrettable that all the expense in time and money does not buy a more substantive national conversation. Still, we find out what notions and attitudes are lurking in the minds of some of our politicians, and what they hope will have the power to stir some part of the populace.

One of our candidates has called for an attack on the "university cartel," by which he means our system of public higher education. The phrase is startling, considering that these institutions are in effect great city-states, shaped by their regions and histories, largely supported by their alumni, variously specialized around faculties that are attracted by distinctive areas of excellence. Recently, despite their enormous contributions to science and technology, they have been losing the support of many state legislatures, first on the pretext of austerity, and then on the grounds that they were properly understood as burdens on the public rather than as public assets. As state financing fell tuitions

rose, involving many students in burdensome debt. For generations people had, in effect, prepaid their children's and grandchildren's tuition and underwritten the quality of their education by paying taxes. Suddenly the legislatures decided to put the money to other uses, or to cut taxes, and families were obliged to absorb much higher costs. For this, blame has fallen on the universities. And since the new cost of university is weighed against potential earnings, students and families being so burdened, the humanities are under great pressure to justify their existence. As it happens, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has a fine music school, and Rensselaer Polytechnic gives its students prizes for fiction and poetry. These schools might know something about nurturing the technical mind. But there is an impulse behind the recent assaults on great institutions that is historically expressed as social engineering. The ideal worker will not have a head full of poetry, say the neo-Benthamites. It is assumed, of course, that he or she will be potentially omniscient in service to the ever-changing needs and demands of the new economy — highly trained, that is, to acquire some undescribed skill set that will be proof against obsolescence. We await particulars. But the object is clear — to create a virtual army out of the general population who will compete successfully against whomever for whatever into an endless future, at profound cost to themselves. All this differs from military engagement in one great particular. The generals are always assumed to be free to abandon their armies and go over to the other side, if there is profit in it.

The United States is in many ways a grand experiment. Let us take Iowa as an example. What would early nineteenth-century settlers on the open prairie do first? Well, one of the first things they did was found a university, which is now about one hundred seventy years old. Agriculture became, as it remains, the basis of the state economy. How did the university develop in response to this small, agrarian population? It became, as it remains, a thriving and innovative center for the arts — theater, music, painting, and, of course, creative writing. The medical school and the professional schools are fine, as well. The sciences are very strong. But the arts are the signature of the place and have been for generations. Let us say that these old Iowans did not invest their resources and their youth as wisely as they might have. Or let us say that, the world lying open to them, they had the profound satisfaction of doing what they wanted to do, at a cost to themselves in mercenary terms, with immeasurable returns in humanist terms. Their university has been a great nurturer of American letters. If Tocqueville was right, it has nurtured a great deal more besides.

What are we doing here, we professors of English? Our project is often dismissed as elitist. That word has a new and novel sting in American politics. This is odd, in a period uncharacteristically dominated by political dynasties. Apparently the slur doesn't stick to those who show no sign of education or sophistication, no matter what their pedigree. Be that as it may. There is a fundamental slovenliness in much public discourse that can graft heterogeneous things together around a single word. There is justified alarm about the bizarre concentrations of wealth that

have occurred globally, and the tiny fraction of the wealthiest one percent who have wildly disproportionate influence over the lives of the rest of us. They are called the elite, and so are those of us who encourage the kind of thinking that probably does make certain of the young less than ideal recruits to their armies of the employed. If there is a point where the two meanings overlap, it would be in the fact that the teaching we do is what in America we have always called liberal education, education appropriate to free people, very much including those old lowans who left the university to return to the hamlet or the farm. Now, in a country richer than any they could have imagined, we are endlessly told we must cede that humane freedom to a very uncertain promise of employability. It seems most unlikely that any oligarch foresees this choice as being forced on his or her own children. I note here that these criticisms and pressures are not brought to bear on our private universities, though most or all of them receive government money. Elitism in its classic sense is not being attacked but asserted and defended.

If I seem to have conceded an important point in saying that the humanities do not prepare ideal helots,¹¹ economically speaking, I do not at all mean to imply that they are less than ideal for preparing capable citizens, imaginative and innovative contributors to a full and generous, and largely unmonetizable, national life. America has known long enough how to be a prosperous country, for all its deviations from the narrow path of economic rationalism. Empirically speaking, these errancies are highly compatible with our flourishing economically, if they are not a cause of it, which is more than we can know. The politicians who

attack public higher education as too expensive have made it so for electoral or ideological reasons and could undo the harm with the stroke of a pen. They have created the crisis to which they hope to bring their draconian solutions.¹²

Neo-Benthamism stands or falls with our unquestioning subservience to the notion of competition, which really comes down to our dealing with the constant threat on the part of these generals to abandon their armies and, of course, with their demonstrated willingness to act on the threat. Does anyone who cares for such things owe them those great and ancient pleasures of life — poetry, eloquence, memory, the fires of imagination, the depth of thought? Do the pressures created in the larger world deprive us and the world of gifts the Chinese or the Russians would bring to it? We know these cultures have been rich and brilliant in ways that are no longer visible to us, at least. If we do have this effect, is there one thing good about it, for us or for them? If the vastness of the Russian imagination, the elegance of the Chinese eye and hand, were present to us to admire without invidious comparison, of them to us or us to them, wouldn't the world be richer for us all?

If the rise of humanism was a sunrise, then in this present time we are seeing an eclipse. I take it to be a merely transient gloom, because the work of those old scholars and translators and printers, the poets and philosophers they recovered and the poets and philosophers who came after them, the habit of literacy and the profound interest in the actual world and the present time, have all taken hold, more profoundly than we know. We have not

lost them. We have only forgotten what they mean. We have forgotten to understand them for what they are, a spectacular demonstration of the capacities of the human mind, always renewed in our own experience, igniting possibilities no one could have foreseen. Tocqueville may be no more than conventional in speaking of them as “gifts which heaven shares out by chance.” And it may be that the convention of ascribing our gifts to a divine source, a convention that comes down from the earliest humanists, gave him and them a language able to capture something our truncated philosophies cannot accommodate. I never hear the phrase “human grandeur,” though many a planet has swum into my ken, though I know the rings of Saturn in detail. Step back and consider that, more or less hidden from sight, uniquely on this tiny planet there was a cache of old books and scrolls, testimonies to human thought, that when opened, opened the universe to us — six hundred years on, of course, which is not a heartbeat in cosmic time. An amazing tale, certainly. We deal in disparagement and feel it proves we are freer of illusion than earlier generations were. Tocqueville had seen the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, but what of that? We are, as we have always been, dangerous creatures, the enemies of our own happiness. But the only help we have ever found for this, the only melioration, is in mutual reverence. God’s grace comes to us unmerited, the theologians say. But the grace we could extend to one another we consider it best to withhold in very many cases, presumptively, or in the absence of what we consider true or sufficient merit (we being more particular than God), or because few gracious acts, if they really deserve the name, would stand up to cost-benefit analysis. This is not the consequence of a new

atheism or a systemic materialism that afflicts our age more than others. It is good old human meanness, which finds its terms and pretexts in every age. The best argument against human grandeur is the meagerness of our response to it, paradoxically enough.

Then how to recover the animating spirit of humanism? For one thing, it would help if we reclaimed, or simply borrowed, conceptual language that would allow us to acknowledge that some things are so brilliant they can only be understood as virtuosic acts of mind, thought in the pure enjoyment of itself, whether in making a poem or a scientific discovery, or just learning something it feels unaccountably good to know. There is an unworldliness in the experience, and in what it yields, that requires a larger understanding than our terse vocabularies of behavior and reward can capture. I have had students tell me that they had never heard the word *beautiful* applied to a piece of prose until they came to us at the workshop. Literature had been made a kind of data to illustrate, supposedly, some graceless theory that stood apart from it, and that would be shed in a year or two and replaced by something post- or neo- and in any case as gracelessly irrelevant to a work of language as whatever it displaced. I think this phenomenon is an effect of the utilitarian hostility to the humanities and to art, an attempt to repackage them, to give them some appearance of respectability. And yet the beautiful persists, and so do eloquence and depth of thought, and they belong to all of us because they are the most pregnant evidence we can have of what is possible in us.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

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1. How long has humanism shaped our culture?
 2. How does Robinson seem to be defining humanism?
 3. What point does Robinson make about the human destruction of recent wars?
 4. How does cultural competition shape educational goals?
 5. Why do some governments censor humanistic literature?
 6. Why does Robinson think the humanities are important and must be taught?
 7. How well do legislators support educational funding for the humanities?



QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. One of the central points Robinson makes is that the United States has always had an “imagined competitor” ([para. 5](#)). She suggests that the sense of competition may have been initiated during the Cold War. What was the Cold War, and how could it have produced a sense of competition that affected the emphasis or de-emphasis on the humanities? Be sure to research articles on *Sputnik*, the first artificial satellite.
2. Robinson asks the question, “Why teach the humanities?” Having read her essay and reviewed your own experiences in and plans for education, offer an essay that answers that question from your point of view. Why would you want to study the humanities? What benefits do you get from such study? What specifically do you study or plan to study in the humanities: philosophy, literature, history, music, the arts?
3. Deep in the unusually long first paragraph, Robinson says, “I hope for the day when all good books can be read as speaking in as broad a voice, engaged with the Great Questions.” Robinson does not say what she thinks the “Great Questions” are, so write an essay in which

you supply that omission. What are the Great Questions? Which of the humanistic areas of study are likely to provide opportunity to ask those questions? Why should we ask the Great Questions? What role do they have in a college education? How important do you think it is to reflect on the Great Questions in an academic setting?

4. Beginning in [paragraph 4](#) Robinson suggests that a president, or important leader, is expected to speak as if he or she did not possess an awareness of history. Examine the essay to see how you can explain what she means. In contemporary politics, do you see evidence that the policy makers have a deep awareness of history? Why would it be important for policy makers to know history, both domestic and international?
5. In [paragraph 14](#) Robinson mentions capitalism and the nature of competition that is one of the most important qualities of capitalism. Explain what she means by “rowdy old capitalism.” What is its interest in the humanities or humanism? Is it possible that capitalism is at the root of the recent hostility to the humanities? Why would capitalism’s emphasis on competition of all kinds lead to a disregard of literature, poetry, music, and the arts? Is it possible that Robinson misreads the purposes of capitalism?

CONNECTIONS

1. Review the descriptions of education by Montaigne (“[Of the Education of Children](#)”), himself a prominent humanist, and Montessori (“[The Montessori Method](#)”) and decide how much they support the hopes of Robinson for an emphasis on the humanities. How much of an emphasis do Montaigne and Montessori put upon the employability of the student? Which of these writers has the least concern for preparing the student for a job? Which has the most concern for training the student for work? Thinking in terms of your own education, which of these authors is most encouraging to you for the path you have chosen? Do you think your peers are willing to sacrifice a general education for training as a worker?

2. Robinson seems to implicate capitalism in the fact that currently the - humanities are being ignored in our universities and colleges. She makes reference to robotic workers produced to advance capitalism. However, in Andrew Carnegie's essay, "[The Gospel of Wealth](#)", the end use of the capitalist's money is to improve the lot of the common citizen. Carnegie founded 1,500 libraries across America. Are those repositories of the kinds of books Robinson champions? Does the version of capitalism Carnegie champions point to valuing the humanities? Do you think that Carnegie would support a humanistic education for his workers? How might Robinson and Carnegie critique each other?



Howard Gardner *A Rounded Version: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*



Steve Hansen/The LIFE Images Collection/Getty Images

HOWARD GARDNER (b. 1943), Hobbs Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, is senior director of Harvard's Project Zero, a program dedicated to improving education in schools by emphasizing creativity in thinking and problem solving. By emphasizing the arts and the

newer electronic technologies associated with learning, the program cultivates a “culture of thinking” in the classroom as opposed to a culture of rote learning. Gardner has received a - MacArthur Foundation award (1981), which supported his research for five years, and has won a number of important awards in the field of education, including the Grawemeyer Award in Education (1990), given for the first time to an American. Among his many books are *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership* (1995) and *Extraordinary Minds: Portraits of Exceptional Individuals and an Examination of Our Extraordinariness* (1997).

Perhaps the most important and best-known product of Project Zero is the theory of multiple intelligences, which Gardner first published in *Frames of Mind* (1983). His more recent book, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (1999), offers a revisitation and more detailed elaboration on multiple intelligence theory and its application. In *Frames of Mind*, he noted that the general attitude toward intelligence centers on the IQ (intelligence quotient) test that Alfred Binet (1857–1911) devised. Binet believed that intelligence is measurable and that IQ tests result in numerical scores that are reliable indicators of a more or less permanent basic intelligence. Gardner offered several objections to that view. One was that IQ predictors might point to achievement in schools and colleges but not necessarily to achievement in life. For example, students with middling scores performed at extraordinary levels in business, politics, and other walks of life, whereas high-achieving students often settled for middling careers. The reports on high-performing executives

indicated a considerable intelligence at work, but it was not necessarily the kind of intelligence that could be measured by the Binet tests.

Gardner also was intrigued by findings that localized regions of the brain controlled specific functions of the mind. For example, studies had established that certain regions of the brain were specialized for language functions, whereas others were specialized for physical movement, music, mathematics, and other skills. When those portions of the brain suffered damage, as with stroke or accident, the functions for which they were specialized were adversely affected. These observations, which were plentiful in the work of neurologists during and after World War II, led Gardner to propose the existence of a variety of intelligences rather than only one.

As he explains in the following essay from his book *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice* (1993), his studies led him to propose seven distinct intelligences. The first is linguistic, which naturally includes language. This intelligence applies not only to learning languages but also to using language well — as, for example, in the case of poets and writers. The second is logical-mathematical, which refers to the applications of mathematics and logical reasoning. Our society uses these verbal-mathematical forms of intelligence as the practical measure of intelligence: the SATs, for instance, depend almost entirely on measuring these forms.

Gardner adds five more forms of intelligence. Spatial intelligence concerns the ways in which we perceive and imagine spatial relations. Some people, such as architects and sculptors, are clearly more gifted than others at imagining space. Musical intelligence is seen as distinct from other forms of intelligence if only because some people, such as child prodigies, are apparently born with superior musical abilities. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence shows up in dancers and athletes, like Mikhail Baryshnikov and Jackie Joyner-Kersey, who perform extraordinarily with their bodies. But bodily-kinesthetic intelligence also applies to detailed physical work, including the work of surgeons, dentists, and craftspeople such as weavers, potters, metalworkers, and jewelers.

Finally, Gardner also defines two kinds of personal intelligence that are difficult to isolate and study but that he feels must be regarded as forms of intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence concerns the way we get along with other people. People with high interpersonal intelligence might be salespeople, teachers, politicians, or evangelists. They respond to others and are sensitive to their needs and their concerns. They understand cooperation, compromise, and respect for other people's views. The second kind of personal intelligence — intrapersonal — refers to how one understands oneself. The self-knowledge to recognize one's strengths and weaknesses and to avoid an inflated sense of self-importance constitutes a high degree of intrapersonal intelligence.

Gardner sees all these intelligences working together in the individual. As he says, when one type of intelligence dominates, individuals can exhibit atypical behavior, as in people on the autism spectrum, who may be experts on specific knowledge areas but have difficulty communicating conventionally with others. Because the individual must nurture all these intelligences to develop into a complete person, Gardner is working to revise educational practices to reflect all varieties of intelligence.

Greeks in the time of Plato and Aristotle seem to have understood much of what Gardner says. They included music and dance, for example, in the curriculum of their schools. They developed linguistic and interpersonal skills in the teaching of rhetoric and made logic and mathematics central to their teaching. The motto inscribed over the Oracle of Delphi, one of Ancient Greece's most important sources of wisdom, reads — “Know thyself” — admonishes us to develop intrapersonal intelligence.

GARDNER'S RHETORIC

Rather than open the essay by describing the multiple intelligences, Gardner starts with a dramatic scene and a hypothetical story. He describes two eleven-year-old children who take an IQ test and then are regarded in special ways by their teachers: one is expected to do well in school, the other is expected to do less well. The expectations are met. But years later the student with the lower IQ is vastly more successful in business than the student who scored higher. Why is this so? The rest of the essay answers that implied question.

One of the most important devices Gardner relies on is enumeration. He has seven different kinds of intelligence to discuss and takes each one in turn. The reader is not aware of a special order of importance to the seven forms of intelligence: the first, musical intelligence, is not necessarily the most important or the first to be recognized in an individual. Bodily-kinesthetic is not necessarily less important because it comes after musical intelligence. By placing logical-mathematical intelligence in the middle of the sequence, Gardner suggests that this form of intelligence, which our society traditionally treats as first in importance, should take its place beside a range of intelligences that are all more or less equal in value.

Just as important as the use of enumeration is Gardner's use of parallelism in the structure of each of the intelligences he enumerates. For each he offers a subhead that identifies the specific intelligence and then a "sketch with a thumbnail biography" that helps establish the nature of the intelligence. Then Gardner discusses the details of each intelligence and suggests ways in which it may relate to other forms of intelligence. This method has the advantage of extreme clarity. Likewise, parallel examples and quotations in describing each intelligence make the point over and over and ultimately produce a convincing argument without the appearance of argument.

Gardner makes another important rhetorical decision regarding the size and nature of the paragraphs. Modern readers, conditioned by newspapers and magazines, expect paragraphs to be short and direct. Gardner's paragraphs reflect a decision to

communicate with a general reading audience rather than an audience of specialists or specially educated readers. For that reason, a single subject may sometimes be discussed in two or more adjacent paragraphs, with the paragraph break acting as a “breather” (see [paras. 19–20](#) and [22–23](#)).

All these rhetorical devices aid the reader in absorbing complex material. Gardner’s primary efforts in this essay are to facilitate communication. He keeps his language simple, his sentences direct, and his paragraphs brief. For the modern reader, this is a recipe for understanding.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Howard Gardner’s “A Rounded Version: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences.” Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What constitutes an intelligence, according to Gardner?
2. What is the most compelling evidence for the theory of multiple intelligences?

A Rounded Version: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences

Coauthored by Joseph Walters

Two eleven-year-old children are taking a test of “intelligence.” They sit at their desks laboring over the meanings of different words, the interpretation of graphs, and the solutions to arithmetic problems. They record their answers by filling in small circles on a single piece of paper. Later these completed answer sheets are scored objectively: the number of right answers is converted into a standardized score that compares the individual child with a population of children of similar age.

The teachers of these children review the different scores. They notice that one of the children has performed at a superior level; on all sections of the test, she answered more questions correctly than did her peers. In fact, her score is similar to that of children three to four years older. The other child’s performance is average — his scores reflect those of other children his age.

A subtle change in expectations surrounds the review of these test scores. Teachers begin to expect the first child to do quite well during her formal schooling, whereas the second should have only moderate success. Indeed these predictions come true. In other words, the test taken by the eleven-year-olds serves as a reliable predictor of their later performance in school.

How does this happen? One explanation involves our free use of the word “intelligence”: the child with the greater “intelligence” has the ability to solve problems, to find the answers to specific questions, and to learn new material quickly and efficiently. These skills in turn play a central role in school success. In this view, “intelligence” is a singular faculty that is brought to bear in any problem-solving situation. Since schooling deals largely with solving problems of various sorts, predicting this capacity in young children predicts their future success in school.

“Intelligence,” from this point of view, is a general ability that is found in varying degrees in all individuals. It is the key to success in solving problems. This ability can be measured reliably with standardized pencil-and-paper tests that, in turn, predict future success in school.

What happens after school is completed? Consider the two individuals in the example. Looking further down the road, we find that the “average” student has become a highly successful mechanical engineer who has risen to a position of prominence in both the professional community of engineers as well as in civic groups in his community. His success is no fluke — he is considered by all to be a talented individual. The “superior” student, on the other hand, has had little success in her chosen career as a writer; after repeated rejections by publishers, she has taken up a middle management position in a bank. While certainly not a “failure,” she is considered by her peers to be quite “ordinary” in her adult accomplishments. So what happened?

This fabricated example is based on the facts of intelligence testing. IQ tests predict school performance with considerable accuracy, but they are only an indifferent predictor of performance in a profession after formal schooling.¹ Furthermore, even as IQ tests measure only logical or logical-linguistic capacities, in this society we are nearly “brain-washed” to restrict the notion of intelligence to the capacities used in solving logical and linguistic problems.

Suspend the usual judgment of what constitutes intelligence and let your thoughts run freely over the capabilities of humans.... Under this experiment, a quite different view of intelligence emerges.

To introduce an alternative point of view, undertake the following “thought experiment.” Suspend the usual judgment of what constitutes intelligence and let your thoughts run freely over the capabilities of humans — perhaps those that would be picked out by the proverbial Martian visitor. In this exercise, you are drawn to the brilliant chess player, the world-class violinist, and the champion athlete; such outstanding performers deserve special consideration. Under this experiment, a quite different view of *intelligence* emerges. Are the chess player, violinist, and athlete

“intelligent” in these pursuits? If they are, then why do our tests of “intelligence” fail to identify them? If they are not “intelligent,” what allows them to achieve such astounding feats? In general, why does the contemporary construct “intelligence” fail to explain large areas of human endeavor?

In this chapter we approach these problems through the theory of multiple intelligences (MI). As the name indicates, we believe that human cognitive competence is better described in terms of a set of abilities, talents, or mental skills, which we call “intelligences.” All normal individuals possess each of these skills to some extent; individuals differ in the degree of skill and in the nature of their combination. We believe this theory of intelligence may be more humane and more veridical² than alternative views of intelligence and that it more adequately reflects the data of human “intelligent” behavior. Such a theory has important educational implications, including ones for curriculum development.

What Constitutes an Intelligence?

The question of the optimal definition of intelligence looms large in our inquiry. Indeed, it is at the level of this definition that the theory of multiple intelligences diverges from traditional points of view. In a traditional view, intelligence is defined operationally as the ability to answer items on tests of intelligence. The inference from the test scores to some underlying ability is supported by statistical techniques that compare responses of subjects at different ages; the apparent correlation of these test scores across ages and across different tests corroborates the notion that the general faculty of intelligence, *g*, does not change much with age or with

training or experience. It is an inborn attribute or faculty of the individual.

Multiple intelligences theory, on the other hand, pluralizes the traditional concept. An intelligence entails the ability to solve problems or fashion products that are of consequence in a particular cultural setting or community. The problem-solving skill allows one to approach a situation in which a goal is to be obtained and to locate the appropriate route to that goal. The creation of a *cultural* product is crucial to such functions as capturing and transmitting knowledge or expressing one's views or feelings. The problems to be solved range from creating an end for a story to anticipating a mating move in chess to repairing a quilt. Products range from scientific theories to musical compositions to successful political campaigns.

MI theory is framed in light of the biological origins of each problem-solving skill. Only those skills that are universal to the human species are treated. Even so, the biological proclivity to participate in a particular form of problem solving must also be coupled with the cultural nurturing of that domain. For example, language, a universal skill, may manifest itself particularly as writing in one culture, as oratory in another culture, and as the secret language of anagrams in a third.

Given the desire of selecting intelligences that are rooted in biology, and that are valued in one or more cultural settings, how does one actually identify an "intelligence"? In coming up with our list, we consulted evidence from several different sources:

knowledge about normal development and development in gifted individuals; information about the breakdown of cognitive skills under conditions of brain damage; studies of exceptional populations, including prodigies, idiots savants, and autistic children; data about the evolution of cognition over the millennia; cross-cultural accounts of cognition; psychometric studies, including examinations of correlations among tests; and psychological training studies, particularly measures of transfer and generalization across tasks. Only those candidate intelligences that satisfied all or a majority of the criteria were selected as bona fide intelligences. A more complete discussion of each of these criteria for an “intelligence” and the seven intelligences that have been proposed so far is found in *Frames of Mind*.³ This book also considers how the theory might be disproven and compares it to competing theories of intelligence.

In addition to satisfying the aforementioned criteria, each intelligence must have an identifiable core operation or set of operations. As a neutrally based computational system, each intelligence is activated or “triggered” by certain kinds of internally or externally presented information. For example, one core of musical intelligence is the sensitivity to pitch relations, whereas one core of linguistic intelligence is the sensitivity to phonological features.

An intelligence must also be susceptible to encoding in a symbol - system — a culturally contrived system of meaning, which captures and conveys important forms of information. Language, picturing, and mathematics are but three nearly worldwide symbol

systems that are necessary for human survival and productivity. The relationship of a candidate intelligence to a human symbol system is no accident. In fact, the existence of a core computational capacity anticipates the existence of a symbol system that exploits that capacity. While it may be possible for an intelligence to proceed without an accompanying symbol system, a primary characteristic of human intelligence may well be its gravitation toward such an embodiment.

The Seven Intelligences

Having sketched the characteristics and criteria of an intelligence, we turn now to a brief consideration of each of the seven intelligences. We begin each sketch with a thumbnail biography of a person who demonstrates an unusual facility with that intelligence. These biographies illustrate some of the abilities that are central to the fluent operation of a given intelligence. Although each biography illustrates a particular intelligence, we do not wish to imply that in adulthood intelligences operate in isolation. Indeed, except for abnormal individuals, intelligences always work in concert, and any sophisticated adult role will involve a melding of several of them. Following each biography we survey the various sources of data that support each candidate as an “intelligence.”

Musical Intelligence

When he was three years old, Yehudi Menuhin was smuggled into the San Francisco Orchestra concerts by his parents. The sound of Louis Persinger’s violin so entranced the youngster that he insisted on a violin

for his birthday and Louis Persinger as his teacher. He got both. By the time he was ten years old, Menuhin was an international performer.⁴

Violinist Yehudi Menuhin's musical intelligence manifested itself even before he had touched a violin or received any musical training. His powerful reaction to that particular sound and his rapid progress on the instrument suggest that he was biologically prepared in some way for that endeavor. In this way evidence from child prodigies supports our claim that there is a biological link to a particular intelligence. Other special populations, such as autistic children who can play a musical instrument beautifully but who cannot speak, underscore the independence of musical intelligence.

A brief consideration of the evidence suggests that musical skill passes the other tests for an intelligence. For example, certain parts of the brain play important roles in perception and production of music. These areas are characteristically located in the right hemisphere, although musical skill is not as clearly "localized," or located in a specifiable area, as language. Although the particular susceptibility of musical ability to brain damage depends on the degree of training and other individual differences, there is clear evidence for "amusia" or loss of musical ability.

Music apparently played an important unifying role in Stone Age (Paleolithic) societies. Birdsong provides a link to other species. Evidence from various cultures supports the notion that music is a universal faculty. Studies of infant development suggest that there

is a “raw” computational ability in early childhood. Finally, musical notation provides an accessible and lucid symbol system.

In short, evidence to support the interpretation of musical ability as an “intelligence” comes from many different sources. Even though musical skill is not typically considered an intellectual skill like mathematics, it qualifies under our criteria. By definition it deserves consideration; and in view of the data, its inclusion is empirically justified.

Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence

Fifteen-year-old Babe Ruth played third base. During one game his team’s pitcher was doing very poorly and Babe loudly criticized him from third base. Brother Mathias, the coach, called out, “Ruth, if you know so much about it, YOU pitch!” Babe was surprised and embarrassed because he had never pitched before, but Brother Mathias insisted. Ruth said later that at the very moment he took the pitcher’s mound, he KNEW he was supposed to be a pitcher and that it was “natural” for him to strike people out. Indeed, he went on to become a great major league pitcher (and, of course, attained legendary status as a hitter).⁵

Like Menuhin, Babe Ruth was a child prodigy who recognized his “instrument” immediately upon his first exposure to it. This recognition occurred in advance of formal training.

Control of bodily movement is, of course, localized in the motor cortex, with each hemisphere dominant or controlling bodily movements on the contra-lateral side. In right-handers, the dominance for such movement is ordinarily found in the left hemisphere. The ability to perform movements when directed to

do so can be impaired even in individuals who can perform the same movements reflexively or on a nonvoluntary basis. The existence of specific *apraxia*⁶ constitutes one line of evidence for a bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.

The evolution of specialized body movements is of obvious advantage to the species, and in humans this adaptation is extended through the use of tools. Body movement undergoes a clearly defined developmental schedule in children. And there is little question of its universality across cultures. Thus it appears that bodily-kinesthetic “knowledge” satisfies many of the criteria for an intelligence.

The consideration of bodily-kinesthetic knowledge as “problem solving” may be less intuitive. Certainly carrying out a mime sequence or hitting a tennis ball is not solving a mathematical equation. And yet, the ability to use one’s body to express an emotion (as in a dance), to play a game (as in a sport), or to create a new product (as in devising an invention) is evidence of the cognitive features of body usage. The specific computations required to solve a particular bodily-kinesthetic *problem*, hitting a tennis ball, are summarized by Tim Gallwey:

At the moment the ball leaves the server’s racket, the brain calculates approximately where it will land and where the racket will intercept it. This calculation includes the initial velocity of the ball, combined with an input for the progressive decrease in velocity and the effect of wind and after the bounce of the ball. Simultaneously, muscle orders are given: not just once, but constantly with refined and updated information. The muscles must cooperate. A movement of the feet occurs, the racket is taken back, the face of the racket kept at a constant angle. Contact is made at a

precise point that depends on whether the order was given to hit down the line or cross-court, an order not given until after a split-second analysis of the movement and balance of the opponent.

To return an average serve, you have about one second to do this. To hit the ball at all is remarkable and yet not uncommon. The truth is that everyone who inhabits a human body possesses a remarkable creation.⁷

Logical-Mathematical Intelligence.

In 1983 Barbara McClintock won the Nobel Prize in medicine or physiology for her work in microbiology. Her intellectual powers of deduction and observation illustrate one form of logical-mathematical intelligence that is often labeled “scientific thinking.” One incident is particularly illuminating. While a researcher at Cornell in the 1920s, McClintock was faced one day with a problem: while *theory* predicted 50-percent pollen sterility in corn, her research assistant (in the “field”) was finding plants that were only 25- to 30-percent sterile. Disturbed by this discrepancy, McClintock left the cornfield and returned to her office, where she sat for half an hour, thinking:

Suddenly I jumped up and ran back to the (corn) field. At the top of the field (the others were still at the bottom) I shouted “Eureka, I have it! I know what the 30% sterility is!” ... They asked me to prove it. I sat down with a paper bag and a pencil and I started from scratch, which I had not done at all in my laboratory. It had all been done so fast; the answer came and I ran. Now I worked it out step by step — it was an intricate series of steps — and I came out with [the same result]. [They] looked at the material and it was exactly as I’d said it was; it worked out exactly as I had diagrammed it. Now, why did I know, without having done it on paper? Why was I so sure?⁸

This anecdote illustrates two essential facts of the logical-mathematical intelligence. First, in the gifted individual, the process of problem solving is often remarkably rapid — the successful scientist copes with many variables at once and creates numerous hypotheses that are each evaluated and then accepted or rejected in turn.

The anecdote also underscores the *nonverbal* nature of the intelligence. A solution to a problem can be constructed *before* it is articulated. In fact, the solution process may be totally invisible, even to the problem solver. This need not imply, however, that discoveries of this sort — the familiar “Aha!” phenomenon — are mysterious, intuitive, or unpredictable. The fact that it happens more frequently to some people (perhaps Nobel Prize winners) suggests the opposite. We interpret this as the work of the logical-mathematical intelligence.

Along with the companion skill of language, logical-mathematical reasoning provides the principal basis for IQ tests. This form of intelligence has been heavily investigated by traditional psychologists, and it is the archetype of “raw intelligence” or the problem-solving faculty that purportedly cuts across domains. It is perhaps ironic, then, that the actual mechanism by which one arrives at a solution to a logical-mathematical problem is not as yet properly understood.

This intelligence is supported by our empirical criteria as well. Certain areas of the brain are more prominent in mathematical calculation than others. There are idiots savants who perform

great feats of calculation even though they remain tragically deficient in most other areas. Child prodigies in mathematics abound. The development of this intelligence in children has been carefully documented by Jean Piaget and other psychologists.

Linguistic Intelligence

At the age of ten, T. S. Eliot created a magazine called “Fireside” to which he was the sole contributor. In a three-day period during his winter vacation, he created eight complete issues. Each one included poems, adventure stories, a gossip column, and humor. Some of this material survives and it displays the talent of the poet.⁹

As with the logical intelligence, calling linguistic skill an “intelligence” is consistent with the stance of traditional psychology. Linguistic intelligence also passes our empirical tests. For instance, a specific area of the brain, called “Broca’s Area,” is responsible for the production of grammatical sentences. A person with damage to this area can understand words and sentences quite well but has difficulty putting words together in anything other than the simplest of sentences. At the same time, other thought processes may be entirely unaffected.

The gift of language is universal, and its development in children is strikingly constant across cultures. Even in deaf populations where a manual sign language is not explicitly taught, children will often “invent” their own manual language and use it surreptitiously! We thus see how an intelligence may operate independently of a specific input modality or output channel.

Spatial Intelligence

Navigation around the Caroline Islands in the South Seas is accomplished without instruments. The position of the stars, as viewed from various islands, the weather patterns, and water color are the only sign posts. Each journey is broken into a series of segments; and the navigator learns the position of the stars within each of these segments. During the actual trip the navigator must envision mentally a reference island as it passes under a particular star and from that he computes the number of segments completed, the proportion of the trip remaining, and any corrections in heading that are required. The navigator cannot see the islands as he sails along; instead he maps their locations in his mental "picture" of the journey.¹⁰

Spatial problem solving is required for navigation and in the use of the notational system of maps. Other kinds of spatial problem solving are brought to bear in visualizing an object seen from a different angle and in playing chess. The visual arts also employ this intelligence in the use of space.

Evidence from brain research is clear and persuasive. Just as the left hemisphere has, over the course of evolution, been selected as the site of linguistic processing in right-handed persons, the right hemisphere proves to be the site most crucial for spatial processing. Damage to the right posterior regions causes impairment of the ability to find one's way around a site, to recognize faces or scenes, or to notice fine details.

Patients with damage specific to regions of the right hemisphere will attempt to compensate for their spatial deficits with linguistic strategies. They will try to reason aloud, to challenge the task, or even make up answers. But such nonspatial strategies are rarely successful.

Blind populations provide an illustration of the distinction between the spatial intelligence and visual perception. A blind person can recognize shapes by an indirect method: running a hand along the object translates into length of time of movement, which in turn is translated into the size of the object. For the blind person, the perceptual system of the tactile modality parallels the visual modality in the seeing person. The analogy between the spatial - reasoning of the blind and the linguistic reasoning of the deaf is notable.

There are few child prodigies among visual artists, but there are idiots savants such as Nadia.¹¹ Despite a condition of severe autism, this preschool child made drawings of the most remarkable representational accuracy and finesse.

Interpersonal Intelligence.

With little formal training in special education and nearly blind herself, Anne Sullivan began the intimidating task of instructing a blind and deaf seven-year-old Helen Keller. Sullivan's efforts at communication were complicated by the child's emotional struggle with the world around her. At their first meal together, this scene occurred:

Annie did not allow Helen to put her hand into Annie's plate and take what she wanted, as she had been accustomed to do with her family. It became a test of wills — hand thrust into plate, hand firmly put aside. The family, much upset, left the dining room. Annie locked the door and proceeded to eat her breakfast while Helen lay on the floor kicking and screaming, pushing and pulling at Annie's chair. [After half an hour] Helen went around the table looking for her family. She discovered no one else was there and that bewildered her. Finally, she sat down and began to eat

her breakfast, but with her hands. Annie gave her a spoon. Down on the floor it clattered, and the contest of wills began anew.¹²

Anne Sullivan sensitively responded to the child's behavior. She wrote home: "The greatest problem I shall have to solve is how to discipline and control her without breaking her spirit. I shall go rather slowly at first and try to win her love."

In fact, the first "miracle" occurred two weeks later, well before the famous incident at the pumphouse. Annie had taken Helen to a small cottage near the family's house, where they could live alone. After seven days together, Helen's personality suddenly underwent a profound change — the therapy had worked:

My heart is singing with joy this morning. A miracle has happened! The wild little creature of two weeks ago has been transformed into a gentle child.¹³

It was just two weeks after this that the first breakthrough in Helen's grasp of language occurred; and from that point on, she progressed with incredible speed. The key to the miracle of language was Anne Sullivan's insight into the *person* of Helen Keller.

Interpersonal intelligence builds on a core capacity to notice distinctions among others; in particular, contrasts in their moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions. In more advanced forms, this intelligence permits a skilled adult to read the intentions and desires of others, even when these have been hidden. This skill appears in a highly sophisticated form in

religious or political leaders, teachers, therapists, and parents. The Helen Keller–Anne Sullivan story suggests that this interpersonal intelligence does not depend on language.

All indices in brain research suggest that the frontal lobes play a prominent role in interpersonal knowledge. Damage in this area can cause profound personality changes while leaving other forms of problem solving unharmed — a person is often “not the same person” after such an injury.

Alzheimer’s disease, a form of presenile dementia, appears to attack posterior brain zones with a special ferocity, leaving spatial, logical, and linguistic computations severely impaired. Yet, Alzheimer’s patients will often remain well groomed, socially proper, and continually apologetic for their errors. In contrast, Pick’s disease, another variety of presenile dementia that is more frontally oriented, entails a rapid loss of social graces.

Biological evidence for interpersonal intelligence encompasses two additional factors often cited as unique to humans. One factor is the prolonged childhood of primates, including the close attachment to the mother. In those cases where the mother is removed from early development, normal interpersonal development is in serious jeopardy. The second factor is the relative importance in humans of social interaction. Skills such as hunting, tracking, and killing in prehistoric societies required participation and cooperation of large numbers of people. The need for group cohesion, leadership, organization, and solidarity follows naturally from this.

Intrapersonal Intelligence.

In an essay called “A Sketch of the Past,” written almost as a diary entry, Virginia Woolf discusses the “cotton wool of existence” — the various mundane events of life. She contrasts this “cotton wool” with three specific and poignant memories from her childhood: a fight with her brother, seeing a particular flower in the garden, and hearing of the suicide of a past visitor:

These are three instances of exceptional moments. I often tell them over, or rather they come to the surface unexpectedly. But now for the first time I have written them down, and I realize something that I have never realized before. Two of these moments ended in a state of despair. The other ended, on the contrary, in a state of satisfaction.

The sense of horror (in hearing of the suicide) held me powerless. But in the case of the flower, I found a reason; and was thus able to deal with the sensation. I was not powerless.

Though I still have the peculiarity that I receive these sudden shocks, they are now always welcome; after the first surprise, I always feel instantly that they are particularly valuable. And so I go on to suppose that the shock-receiving capacity is what makes me a writer. I hazard the explanation that a shock is at once in my case followed by the desire to explain it. I feel that I have had a blow; but it is not, as I thought as a child, simply a blow from an enemy hidden behind the cotton wool of daily life; it is or will become a revelation of some order; it is a token of some real thing behind appearances; and I make it real by putting it into words.¹⁴

This quotation vividly illustrates the intrapersonal intelligence — knowledge of the internal aspects of a person: access to one’s own feeling life, one’s range of emotions, the capacity to effect discriminations among these emotions and eventually to label them and to draw upon them as a means of understanding and

guiding one's own behavior. A person with good intrapersonal intelligence has a viable and effective model of himself or herself. Since this intelligence is the most private, it requires evidence from language, music, or some other more expressive form of intelligence if the observer is to detect it at work. In the above quotation, for example, linguistic intelligence is drawn upon to convey intrapersonal knowledge; it embodies the interaction of intelligences, a common phenomenon to which we will return later.

We see the familiar criteria at work in the intrapersonal intelligence. As with the interpersonal intelligence, the frontal lobes play a central role in personality change. Injury to the lower area of the frontal lobes is likely to produce irritability or euphoria; while injury to the higher regions is more likely to produce indifference, listlessness, slowness, and apathy — a kind of depressive personality. In such “frontal-lobe” individuals, the other cognitive functions often remain preserved. In contrast, among aphasics who have recovered sufficiently to describe their experiences, we find consistent testimony: while there may have been a diminution of general alertness and considerable depression about the condition, the individual in no way felt himself to be a different person. He recognized his own needs, wants, and desires and tried as best he could to achieve them.

The autistic child is a prototypical example of an individual with impaired intrapersonal intelligence; indeed, the child may not even be able to refer to himself. At the same time, such children often exhibit remarkable abilities in the musical, computational, spatial, or mechanical realms.

Evolutionary evidence for an intrapersonal faculty is more difficult to come by, but we might speculate that the capacity to transcend the satisfaction of instinctual drives is relevant. This becomes increasingly important in a species not perennially involved in the struggle for survival.

In sum, then, both interpersonal and intrapersonal faculties pass the tests of an intelligence. They both feature problem-solving endeavors with significance for the individual and the species. Interpersonal intelligence allows one to understand and work with others; intrapersonal intelligence allows one to understand and work with oneself. In the individual's sense of self, one encounters a melding of inter- and intrapersonal components. Indeed, the sense of self emerges as one of the most marvelous of human inventions — a symbol that represents all kinds of information about a person and that is at the same time an invention that all individuals construct for themselves.

Summary: The Unique Contributions of the Theory

As human beings, we all have a repertoire of skills for solving different kinds of problems. Our investigation has begun, therefore, with a consideration of these problems, the contexts they are found in, and the culturally significant products that are the outcome. We have not approached “intelligence” as a reified¹⁵ human faculty that is brought to bear in literally any problem setting; rather, we have begun with the problems that humans *so/ve* and worked back to the “intelligences” that must be responsible.

Evidence from brain research, human development, evolution, and cross-cultural comparisons was brought to bear in our search for the relevant human intelligences: a candidate was included only if reasonable evidence to support its membership was found across these diverse fields. Again, this tack differs from the traditional one: since no candidate faculty is *necessarily* an intelligence, we could choose on a motivated basis. In the traditional approach to “intelligence,” there is no opportunity for this type of empirical decision.

We have also determined that these multiple human faculties, the intelligences, are to a significant extent *independent*. For example, research with brain-damaged adults repeatedly demonstrates that particular faculties can be lost while others are spared. This independence of intelligences implies that a particularly high level of ability in one intelligence, say mathematics, does not require a similarly high level in another intelligence, like language or music. This independence of intelligences contrasts sharply with traditional measures of IQ that find high correlations among test scores. We speculate that the usual correlations among subtests of IQ tests come about because all of these tasks in fact measure the ability to respond rapidly to items of a logical-mathematical or linguistic sort; we believe that these correlations would be substantially reduced if one were to survey in a contextually appropriate way the full range of human problem-solving skills.

In fact, however, nearly every cultural role of any degree of sophistication requires a combination of intelligences.

Until now, we have supported the fiction that adult roles depend largely on the flowering of a single intelligence. In fact, however, nearly every cultural role of any degree of sophistication requires a combination of intelligences. Thus, even an apparently straightforward role, like playing the violin, transcends a reliance on simple musical intelligence. To become a successful violinist requires bodily-kinesthetic dexterity and the interpersonal skills of relating to an audience and, in a different way, choosing a manager; quite possibly it involves an intrapersonal intelligence as well. Dance requires skills in bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and spatial intelligences in varying degrees. Politics requires an interpersonal skill, a linguistic facility, and perhaps some logical aptitude. Inasmuch as nearly every cultural role requires several intelligences, it becomes important to consider individuals as a collection of aptitudes rather than as having a singular problem-solving faculty that can be measured directly through pencil-and-paper tests. Even given a relatively small number of such intelligences, the diversity of human ability is created through the differences in these profiles. In fact, it may well be that the “total is greater than the sum of the parts.” An individual may not be particularly gifted in any intelligence; and yet, because of a particular combination or blend of skills, he or

she may be able to fill some niche uniquely well. Thus it is of paramount importance to assess the particular combination of skills that may earmark an individual for a certain vocational or avocational niche.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. In the heading preceding [paragraph 10](#), Gardner asks, “What Constitutes an Intelligence?” After reading this essay, how would you answer that question? How effectively does Gardner answer it?
2. What is the relation of culture to intelligence? See [paragraph 11](#).
3. Why does society value logical-mathematical intelligence so highly? Do you feel it is reasonable to do so? Why?
4. What relationship do you see between intelligence and problem solving? What relationship do you see between education and problem solving?
5. Do you think that education can enhance these seven forms of intelligence? What evidence can you cite that intelligence is not fixed but can be altered by experience?
6. Why is it important “to assess the particular combination of skills that may earmark an individual” ([para. 51](#))?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Gardner says that his theory of MI (multiple intelligences) was shaped by his observations of “the biological origins of each problem-solving skill” ([para. 12](#)). Why is this important to his theory? How has he connected each of the intelligences to a biological origin? What biological issues are not fully accounted for in the theory of multiple intelligences?

2. In which of these seven forms of intelligence do you excel? Describe your achievements in these forms by giving specific examples that help your reader relate your abilities to the intelligences you have cited. Now that you have identified your primary intelligences, what do they suggest for your later life?
3. Gardner is keenly interested in reforming education in light of his theory of multiple intelligences. How could education be altered to best accommodate the seven forms of intelligence? What would be done differently in schools? Who would benefit from the differences you propose? How would society in general benefit from those differences?
4. Describe a problem-solving situation that requires two or more of the intelligences that Gardner describes. If possible, draw your example from your own experience or the experience of someone you know. Describe how the several intelligences work together to help solve the problem.
5. In some discussions of the forms of intelligence, commentators add an eighth — the naturalist’s ability to recognize fine distinctions and patterns in the natural world. What might be the biological origin for that intelligence? In what cultural context might that intelligence be crucial? Do you feel that there is such an intelligence, or that it is included in other forms of intelligence?

CONNECTIONS

1. Howard Gardner cites seven kinds of intelligence and implies that a good education should both respect and develop each of these. Examine Montaigne’s essay, “[Of the Education of Children](#)”, and decide which of these intelligences Montaigne sees as important to the education of children. Examine [paragraph 23](#), in which he discusses “getting to know men,” and [paragraph 23](#), in which he refers to the child’s tutor helping to make the child “wiser.” Does Montaigne seem to refer to even more forms of intelligence than Gardner does? Would Montaigne agree with Gardner’s theories? Would Gardner agree with Montaigne?

2. Many thinkers consider intelligence to be largely conscious in nature. Taking into consideration the concept of the Jungian unconscious (“[The Personal and the Collective Unconscious](#)”), decide which forms Gardner discusses fit the category of conscious apprehension or the category of unconscious apprehension. Would Jung agree with Gardner’s views of intelligence, or would he modify them to suit their own ideas?



Martha Nussbaum *Education for Democracy*



Robin Holland/Contour RA/Getty Images

MARTHA NUSSBAUM (b. 1947) is Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago, with appointments in the Philosophy Department and Divinity School. She is known for her work in philosophy and literature and for crossing disciplinary boundaries in an effort to examine

principles of justice and the nature of law. She has taught at many universities, including Harvard, Brown, and Oxford, and has been awarded sixty-two honorary degrees. She is the winner of the 2018 Berggruen Prize, awarded yearly to someone whose ideas “have profoundly shaped human self-understanding and advancement in a rapidly changing world.”

She has a special interest in classical literature, and her scholarship has focused on Cicero as well as other classical authors. Among her publications are several important books, including *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (1986), which draws on all the major works of the important Greek playwrights and philosophers, and *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (1997), a defense of using classical texts in a liberal education, with the purpose of educating people to become “citizens of the world.” Among her other books are *Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (1990) and two collections of lectures: *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (1995) and *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (1994). *Sex and Social Justice* (1999) concerns the unequal treatment of women and LGBTQ identifying people. In her statements of intention in the book, she insists on an international attitude of justice toward these groups. One word that constantly recurs in her writing is “equality,” echoing the writings of Thomas Jefferson.

The subjects of her recent books are wide-ranging. *Not for Profit* (2010), from which this selection is taken, is an examination of

contemporary education and the question of how we should be educating citizens to respect and maintain our democracy. Nussbaum begins her book by establishing that we are in a crisis, a situation in which she feels we are not educating people to be citizens with the capacity to evaluate their political circumstances and an understanding of their responsibilities. Her chapters include an analysis of Socratic pedagogy and the classical approach to education through argument and discussion, a review of how imagination is central to education, and, in an afterword, what she sees as the future of the humanities.

Nussbaum is one of the most distinguished humanists in the United States today. Her devotion to the classics is evident in her attention to the humanistic values and principles we have inherited from the Greeks and Romans. She has promoted the humanities in her teaching and her writing, and she sees humanistic education as supporting the values of our democracy, whose basic idea originated in Athens thousands of ago.

NUSSBAUM'S RHETORIC

The most apparent rhetorical strategy that Nussbaum uses is to examine two opposing educational systems. The first is the approach that educates students to foster economic growth, while the second is to foster the development of democratic citizens. She begins by considering the issue of education for democratic citizenship and asks a rhetorical question, "What does it mean, then, for a nation to advance?" This is a huge question and not one people ask all the time — or at all. We hear political slogans

saying we want to move the nation forward, but it is rare that anyone makes an effort to define the concept. One view, she says, is to increase the GDP, the nation's gross domestic product, and for some the goal of education is to produce workers who will help increase the GDP. However, this view does not satisfy her.

Because of her recent scholarship focused on political developments in the modern world, Nussbaum has a global vision that helps her talk about political goals in nations such as China, India, and South Africa, all of which have distinctive educational programs. She describes some of the development of educational programs in these countries that, despite liberal constitutions and the protests of reformers and educational theoreticians, continue a form of education that depends on rote learning and passive students. This is the model of educating for the goal of economic growth.

Nussbaum reviews the educational system in the United States, reminding us that the right to education is not guaranteed in the Constitution, as it is in, for example, the Indian constitution. Currently in the United States, individual states guarantee free primary and secondary education, and they make it compulsory so that there will be educated citizens prepared to vote and defend our democracy. The historical basis of our education program is the liberal arts: the study of history, literature, the arts, and the sciences. High schools and colleges reflect that system, but it is particularly evident in the humanities requirements in the first two years of college. Most foreign universities insist on a single subject for the years it takes to get a degree. Nussbaum

sees this as a surrender to the goal of educating for economic growth.

The problem with educating only for economic growth is that it produces a nation that may become wealthy but that will ignore the poor and the disadvantaged. Such economic growth produces a wealthy elite concerned primarily with their own power and comfort while tolerating the growing poor as a necessary result. For the general public the overall wealth of the nation will give them the feeling that they are doing well, despite the fact that many are left out. Moreover, successful economic growth alone will not necessarily benefit the development of democracy, as China's incredible economic successes demonstrate. There is less expansion of freedom or opportunity for all social classes in China, despite its rapid rise in GDP.

Nussbaum provides examples from the experience of India, which guarantees free education but which has yielded to the demands of the economy. Many Indian parents are proud when their students go to a technical college, but they are ashamed when they study the humanities. Nussbaum fears that this approach will soon harm India's fragile democracy. The result, she says, is that many Indian states have pursued economic growth while "doing little for health, education, and the condition of the rural poor" ([para. 3](#)).

The need for laborers in the new economy is served by an education in the basics: literacy, numeracy, and some exposure to computers and technology. The most important thing for

governments that follow this pattern is that students must not become questioning or critical thinkers. Critical thinking is not important for economic growth — much better are the qualities of “docility and group-think” ([para. 14](#)).

The liberal arts, Nussbaum feels, inculcate questioning and argument. The liberal arts program encourages Socratic approaches to education, which means that students are encouraged to argue with their teachers as well as with each other. Moreover, the arts alone help produce a sense of sympathy for people of different ethnicities and an understanding of different points of view. Nussbaum hopes that a liberal education will help citizens demand that the constitutional aspirations of equality be observed. Education for economic growth produces a necessary tolerance for inequality and a relatively small wealthy elite. The result is the slow growth of antidemocratic policies.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Martha Nussbaum’s “Education for Democracy.” Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What is education for economic growth?
2. Why does a liberal arts education threaten a non-democratic government?
3. What kind of education promotes a student to become a democratic citizen?

Education for Democracy

We, the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

—Preamble, *Constitution of the United States*, 1787

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to ... secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.

—Preamble, *Constitution of India*, 1949

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups.

—*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948

To think about education for democratic citizenship, we have to think about what democratic nations are, and what they strive for. What does it mean, then, for a nation to advance? In one view it means to increase its gross national product per capita. This measure of national achievement has for decades been the standard one used by development economists around the world, as if it were a good proxy for a nation's overall quality of life.

The goal of a nation, says this model of development, should be economic growth. Never mind about distribution and social equality, never mind about the preconditions of stable democracy, never mind about the quality of race and gender relations, never mind about the improvement of other aspects of a human being's quality of life that are not well linked to economic growth. (Empirical studies have by now shown that political liberty, health, and education are all poorly correlated with growth.)¹ One sign of what this model leaves out is the fact that South Africa under apartheid used to shoot to the top of development indices. There was a lot of wealth in the old South Africa, and the old model of development rewarded that achievement (or good fortune), ignoring the staggering distributional inequalities, the brutal apartheid regime, and the health and educational deficiencies that went with it.

This model of development has by now been rejected by many serious development thinkers, but it continues to dominate a lot of policy-making, especially policies influenced by the United States. The World Bank made some commendable progress, under James Wolfensohn,² in recognizing a richer conception of

development, but things then slipped badly, and the International Monetary Fund never made the sort of progress that the Bank did under Wolfensohn. Many nations, and states within nations, are pursuing this model of development. Today's India offers a revealing laboratory of such experiments, as some states (Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh) have pursued economic growth through foreign investment, doing little for health, education, and the condition of the rural poor, while other states (Kerala, Delhi, to some extent West Bengal) have pursued more egalitarian strategies, trying to ensure that health and education are available to all, that the infrastructure develops in a way that serves all, and that investment is tied to job creation for the poorest.

Proponents of the old model sometimes like to claim that the pursuit of economic growth will by itself deliver the other good things I have mentioned: health, education, a decrease in social and economic inequality. By now, however, examining the results of these divergent experiments, we have discovered that the old model really does not deliver the goods as claimed. Achievements in health and education, for example, are very poorly correlated with economic growth.³ Nor does political liberty track growth, as we can see from the stunning success of China. So producing economic growth does not mean producing democracy. Nor does it mean producing a healthy, engaged, educated population in which opportunities for a good life are available to all social classes. Still, everyone likes economic growth these days, and the trend is, if anything, toward increasing reliance on what I have called the "old paradigm," rather than toward a more complex

account of what societies should be trying to achieve for their people.

These baneful trends have recently been challenged in both of the nations that are my focus. By choosing the Obama administration, U.S. voters opted for a group committed to greater equality in health care and a greater degree of attention to issues of equal access to opportunity generally. In India, this past May, in a surprise result, voters delivered a virtual majority to the Congress party, which has combined moderate economic reforms with a strong commitment to the rural poor.⁴ In neither nation, however, have policies been sufficiently rethought with ideas of human development clearly in view. Thus it is not clear that either nation has really embraced a human development paradigm, as opposed to a growth-oriented paradigm adjusted for distribution.

Both nations, however, have written constitutions, and in both, the constitution protects from majority whim a group of fundamental rights that cannot be abrogated even to achieve a large economic benefit. Both nations protect a range of political and civil rights, and both guarantee all citizens the equal protection of the laws regardless of racial, gender, or religious group membership. The Indian list, longer than that of the United States, also includes free compulsory primary and secondary education, and a right to freedom from desperate conditions (a life commensurate with human dignity).⁵ Even though the U.S. federal Constitution does not guarantee a right to education, numerous state constitutions do, and many add other social welfare provisions. In general, we are entitled to conclude that both the United States and India have

rejected the notion that the right way for a nation to proceed is simply to strive to maximize economic growth. It is, then, all the odder that major figures concerned with education, in both nations, continue to behave as if the goal of education were economic growth alone.

In the context of the old paradigm of what it is for a nation to develop, what is on everyone's lips is the need for an education that promotes national development seen as economic growth. Such an education has recently been outlined by the Spellings Commission Report⁶ of the U.S. Department of Education, focusing on higher education. It is being implemented by many European nations, as they give high marks to technical universities and university departments and impose increasingly draconian⁷ cuts on the humanities. It is central to discussions of education in India today, as in most developing nations that are trying to grab a larger share of the global market.

The United States has never had a pure growth-directed model of education. Some distinctive and by now traditional features of our system positively resist being cast in those terms. Unlike virtually every nation in the world, we have a liberal arts model of university education. Instead of entering college/university to study a single subject, students are required to take a wide range of courses in their first two years, prominently including courses in the humanities. This model of university and college education influences secondary education. Nobody is tracked too early into a nonhumanities stream, whether purely scientific or purely vocational, nor do children with a humanities focus lose all contact

with the sciences at an early date. Nor is the emphasis on the liberal arts a vestige of elitism or class distinction. From early on, leading U.S. educators connected the liberal arts to the preparation of informed, independent, and sympathetic democratic citizens. The liberal arts model is still relatively strong, but it is under severe stress now in this time of economic hardship.

Another aspect of the U.S. educational tradition that stubbornly refuses assimilation into the growth-directed model is its characteristic emphasis on the active participation of the child in inquiry and questioning. This model of learning, associated with a long Western philosophical tradition of education theory, ranging from Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the eighteenth century to John Dewey in the twentieth, includes such eminent educators as Friedrich Froebel in Germany, Johann Pestalozzi in Switzerland, Bronson Alcott in the United States, and Maria Montessori⁸ in Italy. In [chapter 4](#) we shall discuss their ideas further. This tradition argues that education is not just about the passive assimilation of facts and cultural traditions, but about challenging the mind to become active, competent, and thoughtfully critical in a complex world. This model of education supplanted an older one in which children sat still at desks all day and simply absorbed, and then regurgitated, the material that was brought their way. This idea of active learning, which usually includes a large commitment to critical thinking and argument that traces its roots back to Socrates,⁹ has profoundly influenced American primary and to some extent secondary education, and this influence has not yet

ceased, despite increasing pressures on schools to produce the sort of student who can do well on a standardized test.

I shall discuss these educational theories later, but I introduce them now in order to point out that we are unlikely to find a pure example of education for economic growth in the United States — so *far*. India is closer; for, despite the widespread influence of the great Tagore,¹⁰ who tried to build his school around the idea of critical thinking and empathetic imagining, and who founded a university built around an interdisciplinary liberal arts model, India's universities today, like those of Europe, have long been structured around the single-subject rather than the liberal arts paradigm. Tagore's university, Visva-Bharati (which means "All-the-World"), was taken over by the government, and now it is just like any other single-subject-model university, largely aiming at market impact. Similarly, Tagore's school has long ceased to define the goals of primary and secondary education. Socratic active learning and exploration through the arts have been rejected in favor of a pedagogy of force-feeding for standardized national examinations. The very model of learning that Tagore (along with the Europeans and Americans I have named) passionately repudiated — in which the student sits passively at a desk while teachers and textbooks present material to be uncritically assimilated — is a ubiquitous reality in India's government schools. When we imagine what education for economic growth would be like, pursued without attention to other goals, we are likely, then, to come up with something that lies relatively close to what India's government-sector schools usually offer.

Education for economic growth needs basic skills, literacy, and numeracy. It also needs some people to have more advanced skills in computer science and technology. Equal access, however, is not terribly important; a nation can grow very nicely while the rural poor remain illiterate...

Nonetheless, our aim is to understand a model that has influence around the world, not to describe a particular school system in a particular nation, so let us simply pose our questions abstractly.

What sort of education does the old model of development suggest? Education for economic growth needs basic skills, literacy, and numeracy. It also needs some people to have more advanced skills in computer science and technology. Equal access, however, is not terribly important; a nation can grow very nicely while the rural poor remain illiterate and without basic computer resources, as recent events in many Indian states show. In states such as Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, we have seen the creation of increased GNP per capita through the education of a technical elite who make the state attractive to foreign investors. The results of this growth have not trickled down to improve the health and well-being of the rural poor, and there is no reason to

think that economic growth requires educating them adequately. This was always the first and most basic problem with the GNP per capita paradigm of development. It neglects distribution, and can give high marks to nations or states that contain alarming inequalities. This is very true of education: Given the nature of the information economy, nations can increase their GNP without worrying too much about the distribution of education, so long as they create a competent technology and business elite.

Here we see yet another way in which the United States has traditionally diverged, at least in theory, from the economic growth paradigm. In the U.S. tradition of public education, ideas of equal opportunity and equal access, though never robust in reality, have always been notional goals, defended even by the most growth-focused politicians, such as the authors of the Spellings Report.

After basic skills for many, and more advanced skills for some, education for economic growth needs a very rudimentary familiarity with history and with economic fact — on the part of the people who are going to get past elementary education in the first place, and who may turn out to be a relatively small elite. But care must be taken lest the historical and economic narrative lead to any serious critical thinking about class, about race and gender, about whether foreign investment is really good for the rural poor, about whether democracy can survive when huge inequalities in basic life-chances obtain. So critical thinking would not be a very important part of education for economic growth, and it has not been in states that have pursued this goal relentlessly, such as the Western Indian state of Gujarat, well known for its combination

of technological sophistication with docility and group-think. The student's freedom of mind is dangerous if what is wanted is a group of technically trained obedient workers to carry out the plans of elites who are aiming at foreign investment and technological development. Critical thinking will, then, be discouraged — as it has so long been in the government schools of Gujarat.

History, I said, might be essential. But educators for economic growth will not want a study of history that focuses on injustices of class, caste, gender, and ethnoreligious membership, because this will prompt critical thinking about the present. Nor will such educators want any serious consideration of the rise of nationalism, of the damages done by nationalist ideals, and of the way in which the moral imagination too often becomes numbed under the sway of technical mastery — all themes developed with scathing pessimism by Rabindranath Tagore in *Nationalism*, lectures delivered during the First World War, which are ignored in today's India, despite the universal fame of Tagore as Nobel Prize — winning author.¹¹ So the version of history that will be presented will present national ambition, especially ambition for wealth, as a great good, and will downplay issues of poverty and of global accountability. Once again, real-life examples of this sort of education are easy to find.

A salient example of this approach to history can be found in the textbooks created by the BJP, India's Hindu-nationalist political party, which also pursues aggressively an economic-growth-based development agenda. These books (now, fortunately, withdrawn,

since the BJP lost power in 2004) utterly discouraged critical thinking and didn't even give it material to work with. They presented India's history as an uncritical story of material and cultural triumph in which all trouble was caused by outsiders and internal "foreign elements." Criticism of injustices in India's past was made virtually impossible by the content of the material and by its suggested pedagogy (for example, the questions at the end of each chapter), which discouraged thoughtful questioning and urged assimilation and regurgitation. Students were asked simply to absorb a story of unblemished goodness, bypassing all inequalities of caste, gender, and religion.

Contemporary development issues, too, were presented with an emphasis on the paramount importance of economic growth and the relative insignificance of distributional equality. Students were told that what matters is the situation of the *average* person (not, for example, how the least well-off are doing). And they were even encouraged to think of themselves as parts of a large collectivity that is making progress, rather than as separate people with separate entitlements: "In social development, whatever benefit an individual derives is only as a collective being."¹² This controversial norm (which suggests that if the nation is doing well, you must be doing well, even if you are extremely poor and suffering from many deprivations) is presented as a fact that students must memorize and regurgitate on mandatory national examinations.

Education for economic growth is likely to have such features everywhere, since the unfettered pursuit of growth is not

conducive to sensitive thinking about distribution or social inequality. (Inequality can reach astonishing proportions, as it did in yesterday's South Africa, while a nation grows very nicely.) Indeed, putting a human face on poverty is likely to produce hesitation about the pursuit of growth; for foreign investment often needs to be courted by policies that strongly disadvantage the rural poor. (In many parts of India, for example, poor agricultural laborers hold down land that is needed to build factories, and they are not likely to be the gainers when their land is acquired by the government — even if they are compensated, they do not typically have the skills to be employed in the new industries that displace them.)¹³

What about the arts and literature, so often valued by democratic - educators? An education for economic growth will, first of all, have contempt for these parts of a child's training, because they don't look like they lead to personal or national economic advancement. For this reason, all over the world, programs in arts and the humanities, at all levels, are being cut away, in favor of the cultivation of the technical. Indian parents take pride in a child who gains admission to the Institutes of Technology and Management; they are ashamed of a child who studies literature, or philosophy, or who wants to paint or dance or sing. American parents, too, are moving rapidly in this direction, despite a long liberal arts tradition.

But educators for economic growth will do more than ignore the arts. They will fear them. For a cultivated and developed sympathy is a particularly dangerous enemy of obtuseness, and moral obtuseness is necessary to carry out programs of economic

development that ignore inequality. It is easier to treat people as objects to be manipulated if you have never learned any other way to see them. As Tagore said, aggressive nationalism needs to blunt the moral conscience, so it needs people who do not recognize the individual, who speak group-speak, who behave, and see the world, like docile bureaucrats. Art is a great enemy of that obtuseness, and artists (unless thoroughly browbeaten and corrupted) are not the reliable servants of any ideology, even a basically good one — they always ask the imagination to move beyond its usual confines, to see the world in new ways.¹⁴ So, educators for economic growth will campaign against the humanities and arts as ingredients of basic education. This assault is currently taking place all over the world.

Pure models of education for economic growth are difficult to find in flourishing democracies since democracy is built on respect for each person, and the growth model respects only an aggregate. However, education systems all over the world are moving closer and closer to the growth model without much thought about how ill-suited it is to the goals of democracy.

How else might we think of the sort of nation and the sort of citizen we are trying to build? The primary alternative to the growth-based model in international development circles, and one with which I have been associated, is known as the Human Development paradigm. According to this model, what is important is the opportunities, or “capabilities,” each person has in key areas ranging from life, health, and bodily integrity to political liberty, political participation, and education. This model of

development recognizes that all individuals possess an inalienable human dignity that must be respected by laws and institutions. A decent nation, at a bare minimum, acknowledges that its citizens have entitlements in these and other areas and devises strategies to get people above a threshold level of opportunity in each.

having a voice in the choice of the policies that govern one's life is a key ingredient of a life worthy of human dignity.

The Human Development model is committed to democracy, since having a voice in the choice of the policies that govern one's life is a key ingredient of a life worthy of human dignity. The sort of democracy it favors will, however, be one with a strong role for fundamental rights that cannot be taken away from people by majority whim — it will thus favor strong protections for political liberty; the freedoms of speech, association, and religious exercise; and fundamental entitlements in yet other areas such as education and health. This model dovetails well with the aspirations pursued in India's constitution (and that of South Africa). The United States has never given constitutional protection, at least at the federal level, to entitlements in “social and economic” areas such as health and education; and yet Americans, too, have a strong sense that the ability of all citizens

to attain these entitlements is an important mark of national success. So the Human Development model is not pie-in-the-sky idealism; it is closely related to the constitutional commitments, not always completely fulfilled, of many if not most of the world's democratic nations.

If a nation wants to promote this type of humane, people-sensitive democracy dedicated to promoting opportunities for “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” to each and every person, what abilities will it need to produce in its citizens? At least the following seem crucial:

- The ability to think well about political issues affecting the nation, to examine, reflect, argue, and debate, deferring to neither tradition nor authority
- The ability to recognize fellow citizens as people with equal rights, even though they may be different in race, religion, gender, and sexuality: to look at them with respect, as ends, not just as tools to be manipulated for one's own profit
- The ability to have concern for the lives of others, to grasp what policies of many types mean for the opportunities and experiences of one's fellow citizens, of many types, and for people outside one's own nation
- The ability to imagine well a variety of complex issues affecting the story of a human life as it unfolds: to think about childhood, adolescence, family relationships, illness, death, and much more in a way informed by an understanding of a wide range of human stories, not just by aggregate data
- The ability to judge political leaders critically, but with an informed and realistic sense of the possibilities available to

them

- The ability to think about the good of the nation as a whole, not just that of one's own local group
- The ability to see one's own nation, in turn, as a part of a complicated world order in which issues of many kinds require intelligent transnational deliberation for their resolution

This is only a sketch, but it is at least a beginning in articulating what we need.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What are the basic educational needs for achieving economic growth?
2. What is critical thinking?
3. How do the arts increase empathy?
4. How can education help preserve our democracy?
5. What is the educational value of the arts?
6. How does the Indian educational system differ from ours?
7. What does Nussbaum say is the purpose of public education?

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. The last paragraph is a listing of seven qualities that Nussbaum feels are needed in education to produce citizens in a democracy. Review them and decide which are important and write an essay that explains why. If you have more qualities that you think should be added to the list, include them and explain why they should be added.

2. How do you interpret the apparent purpose of your own education? What does the educational system seem to be promoting in your development? Where is the emphasis, on preparing you to fit into the work force or to be a democratic citizen? Evaluate your curriculum in terms of the issues that Nussbaum raises. Which courses do you find most define your general educational experience? Discuss the basics, literacy and numeracy, and explain how they prepare you for work or for life.
3. In [paragraph 12](#) Nussbaum says that a nation can increase GDP with a small business elite and a competent technology. If you agree with this statement, explain who or what the small business elite is and what technology is necessary. Is it tolerable that in such a nation the great majority of the people will be vastly unequal economically to the wealthy elite? Nussbaum constantly refers to the question of equality and inequality. Is this really such an important issue in a democracy?
4. Nussbaum says ([para. 14](#)) that an independent-minded student is dangerous if “what is wanted is a group of technically trained obedient workers to carry out the plans of the elite.” Examine that statement and decide if Nussbaum is right. Then argue the case of whether or not there is such an elite who need obedient workers. If they do exist and they need obedient workers, what is the best kind of education that should be provided? Is obedience one of the qualities that your education is building in you?
5. Research the constitution of your state and explain what the state says are the requirements for compulsory education. Then research the state’s description of its state universities and colleges. What kind of demands and what kind of support for the universities and colleges does the state make in its literature about education? What surprises do you find in your research? How explicit are the state’s expectations for what the colleges and universities must accomplish? Do you think the state’s program is student-centered or state-centered?
6. “An education for economic growth will, first of all, have contempt” for arts and literature, Nussbaum observes in [paragraph 19](#). Do you perceive signs of contempt for studying arts and literature in your

college? If so, what seems to be the reason for such contempt? If you see evidence of such contempt, be sure to describe it. Does it come from your fellow students? From your teachers? From you or your family? What is the attitude of people in your community toward the study of literature or the arts? After your research, how would you - characterize our educational goals in the terms Nussbaum describes?

CONNECTIONS

1. Write an essay that compares the views of Dambisa Moyo in her [“Economic Growth Matters to Ordinary People”](#) with Martha Nussbaum’s views of the effect of governments aiming at increased GDP as a measure of advancement. How much common ground do you see these two authors having? What disagreements do they have? Do Moyo’s views accommodate the concerns of Nussbaum for inequality and the nature of labor? How important is the question of democracy for Moyo? What does Nussbaum not take into consideration that Moyo feels is important?
2. Choose one of the other authors in Part Four and write an essay that compares Nussbaum’s most important concerns with the major concerns of the author you choose. What are the general issues they agree on that help you better understand Nussbaum’s essay? What do they consider important that Nussbaum ignores? How much more or less valuable do you think Nussbaum’s essay is after having compared it with the essay of your choice?



Bell Hooks *Educating Women: A Feminist Agenda*



Anthony Barboza/Getty Images

BELL HOOKS (b. 1952) is the pen name of Gloria Jean Watkins, who was born in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, and received her B.A. at Stanford University and her Ph.D. from the University of California at Santa Cruz. She eventually took the name of her great-grandmother and prefers lower-case letters for her name as a way

of taking the spotlight off herself as author and shifting it to her works instead. hooks began her first book at nineteen, and after eight years of research and writing she published *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (1981) while she was still in graduate school. Her works have focused on black feminism, third world issues, and her own personal experiences. She is a memoirist as well as a keen social critic.

In 1994 hooks was named Distinguished Professor of English at City College, City University of New York. She is one of the most visible of America's black intellectuals but has steadfastly asserted, despite her own academic connections, that intellectual achievements are not limited to universities. Much of her work is devoted to analyzing popular culture, such as contemporary films and rap music. Among her works are *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (1989); *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994); *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representation* (1994); *Feminism Is for Everybody* (2000); two personal memoirs, *Bone Black: Memoirs of a Girlhood* (1996) and *Wounds of Passion: The Writing Life* (1997); *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (2009), and *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (2010).

The book from which the following essay is taken, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, was published first in 1984 and then in a new, revised edition in 2000. The selection included here is [Chapter 8](#) in that book. It addresses some of the problems that result from focusing on male domination. hooks believes, on the contrary, that it is not men themselves who are the problem so

much as it is the values of the culture that help support the kinds of oppression feminism tried to attack. Sexism, racism, classism, imperialism, and other forms of oppression are all connected, and therefore the feminist movement must be seen in these contexts.

hooks feels that the radical feminists of the 1960s and later were in many ways reactionaries, in that they were looking backward, limiting themselves by insisting that all men were oppressors and enemies of all women. She also feels that many early feminists assumed that their middle-class “bourgeois” views were universal. However, different groups in society saw the issues from different points of view, and as a result some feminists’ efforts actually pushed people away who might have had a significant stake in the movement. For hooks this was especially true for women of color, whose personal life experiences were often different from those of privileged white women who saw themselves trapped in lives of limited opportunity.

In this selection, hooks is concerned with the question of education of women to help achieve progress in feminism. The early part of her essay focuses on the problems that face the feminist movement in terms of education of women who may have literacy problems and who cannot be reached by pamphlets, brochures, or magazine articles. Then she tackles the problem of highly educated women and their effort to be understood by the mass of women. The question of anti-intellectualism among some feminists is just as important an issue, and one that she deals with directly. Feminist theory and feminist practice present a problem that needs solution.

HOOKS'S RHETORIC

One of the hallmarks of hooks's rhetoric is her use of fairly long paragraphs to analyze a specific point. In [paragraph 2](#), for example, she considers the question of how class biases led feminists to spread information through the printed word, not realizing that many women cannot read and make use of materials that could change their lives. In [paragraph 1](#) hooks introduces a long passage from another writer, Charlotte Bunch, who has written extensively on feminist theory and practice. Later she includes a long quotation from the work of Grace Lee Boggs and James Boggs, using it to reinforce her views. Her emphasis is on general literacy, something that hooks explains has not been taken into account sufficiently by the feminist movement because the movement has been dominated by well-educated women who take for granted that women can read argumentative literature such as the brochures and books that have spurred the feminist movement. She calls this out as an unconscious class bias. hooks, herself an academic, fears that educating college students alone will not be enough to get the teachings of feminism to all the women who may not have heard about it.

hooks says, "Through feminist-headed literacy programs, illiterate women from all classes, and especially those from poor and working-class backgrounds, could learn to read and write in conjunction with learning how to think critically and analytically." She emphasizes this point because she feels that the needs of women whose literacy is not robust enough to deal with the literature that feminist activists recommend have yet to be met.

The important point is that ignoring the needs of less literate women has limited the social class of theorists and activists. The result is that in some circles the leading feminists have been seen as members of a privileged bourgeoisie, and for that reason there has been a backlash of anti-intellectualism aimed at them. hooks goes into this point in some depth in later paragraphs because she feels that anti-intellectualism is destructive to the feminist movement. Of course, as an academic the idea of being anti-intellectual seems destructive on every level because, as she says at length, theory and ideas are essential to the success of feminism. She also says that practical work in the streets and in the fields, such as teaching reading and critical thinking in local neighborhoods, is just as important, but that theory and practice must work together.

One interesting rhetorical strategy hooks uses as evidence is her personal experience. She tells us some of her own experiences that have helped her shape her views and connect with the feminist movement. In [paragraph 5](#) she explains that she was teaching a women's studies course on third world women and it turned out that the vast majority of the students were white. She then suggested that students talk with non-white students one-on-one to gain some insight into their experiences. But the students were reluctant to speak with strangers until they realized that many of the other students did not know much about the women's studies courses because they were not widely advertised. In this way, hooks managed to help students communicate with strangers and make progress with their studies.

Another personal experience she cites concerns a lecture that hooks gave to a non-academic audience about black women writers. She became concerned that her audience would not know many of the authors she was talking about and that her use of language might be too academic for them to follow her observations. Fearful of talking down to her audience, she devised a “translation” of academic style into a plain style that made her talk available to people at all levels of education. She used this anecdote to advise academics and theorists to attempt to reach all levels of hearers and readers. She follows her own advice in this selection, which is written directly and simply.



PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of bell hooks’s [“Educating Women: A Feminist Agenda.”](#) Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. How does basic literacy factor into the feminist agenda?
2. Why have feminists relied on the written word to get the message out?
3. Why is anti-intellectualism a problem for feminists?

Educating Women: A Feminist Agenda

Many participants in contemporary feminist movement are college-educated. It is easy to assume our educational status and privilege are common among women and as a consequence we have not stressed the need to make education, especially basic literacy, a feminist agenda. Although feminist activists have focused on struggling against sexism in educational institutions and childhood socialization, they have not explored deeply the connection between sexist exploitation of women in this society and the degree of women's education, including the lack of basic reading and writing skills. Feminist activist and scholar Charlotte Bunch¹ emphasizes the political importance of literacy in her essay "Feminism and Education":

Revolutionary movements have almost always seen developing a general literacy as one of the most important tasks. Yet in this country, where we assume that most of us can read and write, it is often overlooked...

Reading and writing are valuable in and of themselves, and women should have access to their pleasure. Beyond that, they are vital to change for several reasons. First, they provide a means of conveying ideas and information that may not be readily available in the popular media. For example, the idea of women's liberation first spread through mimeographed articles.... Second, reading and writing help develop an individual's imagination and ability to think.... Third, an individual's access, through reading a variety of interpretations of reality, increases that person's capacity to think for herself, to go against the norms of the culture, and to conceive of alternatives for society — all or which are fundamental to acting politically. Fourth, reading and writing aid each woman's individual survival and success in the world, by increasing her ability to function in her chosen endeavors. And finally, the written word is

still the cheapest and most accessible form of mass communication....
When we recall why literacy is important to movements, it becomes clear that we should neither assume that women are already literate, nor ignore the value of teaching women to read, write, and think as part of feminist education.

Class biases led women organizing feminist movement to simply assume that feminist theory and strategy would be best disseminated to masses of women via written materials. The focus on written material actually prohibits many women from learning about feminism. There are places in the United States where feminist literature is not available, where women and men have never heard the word “feminism” or have heard it and do not know what it really means. Had feminist activists engaged in charting the movement’s direction considered the issue of literacy, they would have known that the emphasis on written material would make feminist ideas accessible to certain classes and groups of women. They would have known that a movement depending on the written word to carry its message would need to stress programs enabling all women to learn reading and writing. The political importance of literacy is still understressed in feminist movement today even though printed material has practically become the sole medium for expression of theory. Many theorists do not even intend their ideas to reach a mass public, and consequently we must take some responsibility for the superficial and perverted versions of feminist ideas that end up in the public imagination, via TV, for example. It is not too late for feminist activists to emphasize literacy and to organize literacy training programs for women. Through feminist-headed literacy programs, illiterate women from all classes, and especially those from poor

and working-class backgrounds, could learn to read and write in conjunction with learning how to think critically and analytically.

Given the bourgeois class biases of many feminist activists, attention has been given to women in higher education, both as students and teachers, with little or no attention given to the need to educate women who lack basic skills. Time and money have been expended creating resources for women scholars and academics to pursue and promote their work. While this effort is important, it should not have greater priority than the struggle to ensure that all women read and write. Given the many financial cutbacks taking place on all levels in the United States, it is unlikely that women could rely on public funding to establish literacy programs. However, programs could be sponsored by financial contributions from women and men in academic institutions who are committed to radical political change. Even if funding were not available from any source, small literacy programs could begin in neighborhoods and communities where politically committed, skilled individuals could teach women reading and writing.

Until masses of women in this society read and write, feminist ideas must also be spread by word of mouth. Many women will not leave or are unable to leave their homes to attend feminist conferences and public talks; door-to-door contact would serve as one way feminist ideas could be shared. This contact could be made by groups of women who are already participating in feminist organizations. Many women's studies students at universities all around the United States grapple with the issue of

whether or not their intellectual and scholarly pursuits are relevant to women as a collective group, to women in the “real” world. Were these students to go into communities and discuss feminist issues door-to-door, they would be working to bridge the gap between their educational experiences and the educational experiences of masses of women.

Many women are frightened by the thought of approaching women who are strangers. One semester I taught a course in a women’s studies program called “Third World Women in the United States,” and though the ethnic background of the students varied from semester to semester, this particular semester the students were almost all white. All the students lamented the absence of larger numbers of women of color. I assigned them the project of talking to non-white women on the campus about their reasons for not taking women’s studies classes. They were encouraged to invite students to visit the classes. At first students were uncomfortable with the assignment. They were uneasy about approaching women they did not know. Most of them found that the women they spoke with often gave lack of information about courses and teachers as their primary reason for never taking a women’s studies course. After the students reported their findings (some did bring groups of non-white women to class), we discussed ways all students could learn more about the women’s studies program. While everyone agreed that printed publicity (ads in the school newspaper or posters) was a good strategy, we decided that talking with women about the courses was the most effective method. In dialogues, women could ask questions and thus dispel stereotypes or fears they might have about feminism

and the women's studies program. The importance of verbal communication holds true for the dissemination of feminist ideas. In a door-to-door campaign to reintroduce feminist politics to a wider audience, women would have the opportunity to ask questions, clarify issues, give feedback. If, in a single year, women stopped spending thousands of dollars to organize conferences that are attended by only a select group of individuals, the goal of that year could be mass outreach in every state, with the intention of taking feminism out of the university and into the streets and homes of this society.

Feminist education has become institutionalized in universities via women's studies programs. While these programs are necessary and are an extremely effective way to teach college students about feminism, they have very little impact, if any, on masses of women and men. There are very few corresponding women's studies programs that make the same knowledge and information available to people who are not college students. Many students, female and male, find they do much of their rethinking of sexist socialization in women's studies classes. Usually the information they receive radically alters their perspectives on reality and changes their view of the nature of sex roles. This kind of information needs to reach more people. As part of her or his political commitment to feminism, a positive praxis for any academic would be offering women's studies courses at a local community center, YWCA, YMCA, church, etc. Even if they did not teach as many hours or days as they did at the university, any amount of time spent making women's studies available to the public would be significant.

During this past year I returned to the small Kentucky town I grew up in to give a talk, “Black Women Writers: The Vision of Community,” during Black History Week. The talk was meant to highlight the way in which black women writers draw on elements of everyday life experiences in black homes and communities. Accustomed to teaching college courses where students are familiar with the literature, I found it challenging to devise a lecturing strategy that would make the same knowledge available to women and men (mainly African American) of all ages, literate and illiterate, many of whom were unfamiliar with the works and authors to be discussed. I relied heavily on reading passages from various texts — poetry, fiction, drama — using passages that involved unusual, exciting descriptions of everyday events. While I was preparing the talk, I was conscious of the desire not to “talk down” to the audience in any way. I wanted to keep the same intellectual level I would have in the college-classroom lecture. With this in mind, I began to think in terms of translation — giving the same message, using a different style, simpler sentence structures, etc.

The value of a feminist work should not be determined by whether or not it conforms to academic standards. The value of a feminist work should not be determined by whether or not it is difficult reading.

The ability to “translate” ideas to an audience that varies in age, sex, ethnicity, and degree of literacy is a skill feminist educators need to develop. Concentration of feminist educators in universities encourages habitual use of an academic style that may make it impossible for teachers to communicate effectively with individuals who are not familiar with either academic style or jargon. All too often educators, especially university professors, fear their work will not be valued by other academics if it is presented in a way that makes it accessible to a wider audience. If these educators thought of rendering their work in a number of different styles, “translations,” they would be able to satisfy arbitrary academic standards while making their work available to masses of people. Difficulty of access has been a problem with much feminist theory. A feminist essay with revolutionary ideas written in a complicated, abstract manner using the jargon of a specific discipline will not have the impact it should have on the consciousness of women and men because it will probably be read by only a small group of people. While feminist scholars should feel free to write using complex styles, if they are sincerely concerned with addressing their ideas to as many people as possible, they must either write in a more accessible manner or write in the manner of their choice and see to it that the piece is made available to others using a style that can be easily understood.

The value of a feminist work should not be determined by whether or not it conforms to academic standards. The value of a feminist work should not be determined by whether or not it is difficult reading. Concurrently, works should not be dismissed simply

because they are difficult. If feminist writing and scholarship aim to promote and advance feminist movement, then matters of style must be considered in conjunction with political intent. There will be no mass-based feminist movement as long as feminist ideas are understood only by a well-educated few. The educational needs of the undereducated woman must be considered by feminist activists if the written word remains the primary medium for the dissemination of feminist ideas.

Another reason education has not been of primary concern to feminist activists is the tug-of-war that has existed within feminist movement between feminist intellectuals and academics, and participants in the movement who equate education with bourgeois privilege and are fiercely anti-intellectual. This tug-of-war has led to the formation of a false dichotomy between theory (the development of ideas) and practice (the actions of the movement), with one group privileging “practice.” As a consequence, there is often little congruity between feminist theory and feminist practice. This intensifies the feelings of some women engaged in activism (like organizing a defense committee for a woman jailed for killing an abusive spouse) that they are superior to or more “politically correct” than women who concentrate their energies on developing ideas. From the onset, women’s liberation movement participants have struggled to unite theory and practice, to create a liberatory feminist praxis (defined by Paulo Freire² as “action and reflection upon the world in order to transform it”). That struggle has been undermined by anti-intellectualism and by elitist academics who believe their “ideas” need not have any connection to real life.

Bourgeois class biases have led many feminist theorists to develop ideas that have little or no relation to the lived experiences of most women, theories that are not useful for making feminist revolution. Annoyed and angered by these ideas, many women dismiss all theory as irrelevant. Yet women need to know that ideas and theories are important and absolutely essential for envisioning and making a successful feminist movement, one that will mobilize groups of people to transform this society. Ironically, lack of knowledge about revolutionary politics leads women to see ideas and theories as unimportant. In their chapter “Dialectics and Revolution,” Grace Lee Boggs and James Boggs³ discuss the importance of ideas to revolutionary activists:

Revolutionists seek to change reality, to make it better. Therefore, revolutionists not only need the revolutionary philosophy of dialectics. They need a revolutionary ideology, i.e. a body of ideas based on analyzing the main contradictions of the particular society which they are trying to change, projecting a vision of a higher form of reality in which this contradiction would be resolved, and relating this resolution to a social force or forces responsible for and capable of achieving it. It is only after you have arrived at the correct ideology that it makes sense to develop your revolutionary politics, i.e. the programs necessary to mobilizing and organizing the revolutionary social forces. If your ideology is wrong, i.e. misdirected or limited, then all the most brilliant programs for militant activity must be absolutely clear about this sequence — from revolutionary philosophy, to revolutionary ideology, to revolutionary politics.

Support of anti-intellectualism in feminist movement is a good example of ideology that undermines and impedes progress. As a group, women have been denied (via sex, race, and class

exploitation and oppression) the right and privilege to develop intellectually. Most women are deprived of access to modes of thought that promote the kind of critical and analytical understanding necessary for liberation struggle. This deprivation leads women to feel insecure about intellectual work and to fear grappling with new ideas and information. It may lead us to dismiss as irrelevant that which is relevant because it is challenging.

Often women of color active in feminist movement are anti-intellectual. Many of us have not had access to university educations and do not hold advanced degrees. We may equate white female hegemonic⁴ dominance of feminist theory and practice with educational status. We may not attack that hegemony (which stems from class and race hierarchies) but instead “put down” intellectual work. By dismissing theory and privileging organization work, some women of color are able to see themselves as more politically engaged where it really counts. Yet by buying into this dichotomy between theory and practice, we place ourselves always on the side of the experiential, and in so doing support the notion (too often fostered by white women) that their role is to do the “brain” work, developing ideas, theories, etc., while our role is to do either the “dirty” work or to contribute the experience to validate and document their analysis. Women of color need to develop intellectually. While we need not be ashamed of not having certain educational skills, we need to assume responsibility for urging and helping one another combine organizational, practical skills with intellectual expertise. We need to examine why there are so few images of intellectual women

who are non-white. Those of us who are educated, who hold advanced degrees, need to examine why we devalue intellectual activity. Women of color and all women from non-privileged backgrounds who are well-educated, who understand the value of intellectual development, the extent to which it strengthens any oppressed person who is seeking self-recovery and radical political change, must share their awareness with all women. We must actively struggle to rid feminist movement of its anti-intellectual bias. We must continue to criticize meaningless intellectual work and promote the kind of study and scholarship that is itself a feminist praxis.

In her writing, Charlotte Bunch encourages women to accept the challenge of education, whether it be the basic struggle for reading and writing skills or the struggle to develop critical and analytical skills. Writing about women's negative attitudes towards theory, Bunch comments:

When teaching feminist theory, one must counter such attitudes and find ways to encourage women to think systematically about the world. Our society (and indeed all societies today) trains only a few people to think in this manner, mostly those from the classes it expects to control the social order. Certainly most women are not expected to take control, and, in consequence, are not encouraged to think analytically. In fact, critical thinking is the antithesis of woman's traditional role. Women are supposed to worry about mundane survival problems, to brood about fate, and to fantasize in a personal manner. We are not meant to think analytically about society, to question the way things are, or to consider how things could be different. Such thinking involves an active, not a passive, relationship to the world. It requires confidence that your thoughts are worth pursuing and that you can make a difference.... My

goal in teaching feminist theory is to provoke women to think about their lives and society in this way.

Encouraging women to strive for education, to develop their intellects, should be a primary goal of feminist movement.

Education as “the practice of freedom” (to use another Freire phrase) will be a reality for women only when we develop an educational methodology that addresses the needs of all women. This is an important feminist agenda.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What is the political importance of literacy?
2. How was the idea of women’s liberation originally spread?
3. How did class bias affect the women’s movement?
4. What are the primary ways in which women are educated about feminism?
5. What is feminism?
6. What is feminist education? How does it differ from general education?
7. How important is it to teach feminist theory?

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. hooks talks about the importance of teaching women’s theory. What is women’s theory and in what contexts can or should it be taught? hooks does not identify the tenets of women’s theory, so you will need to research the term. However, if you have experience in women’s

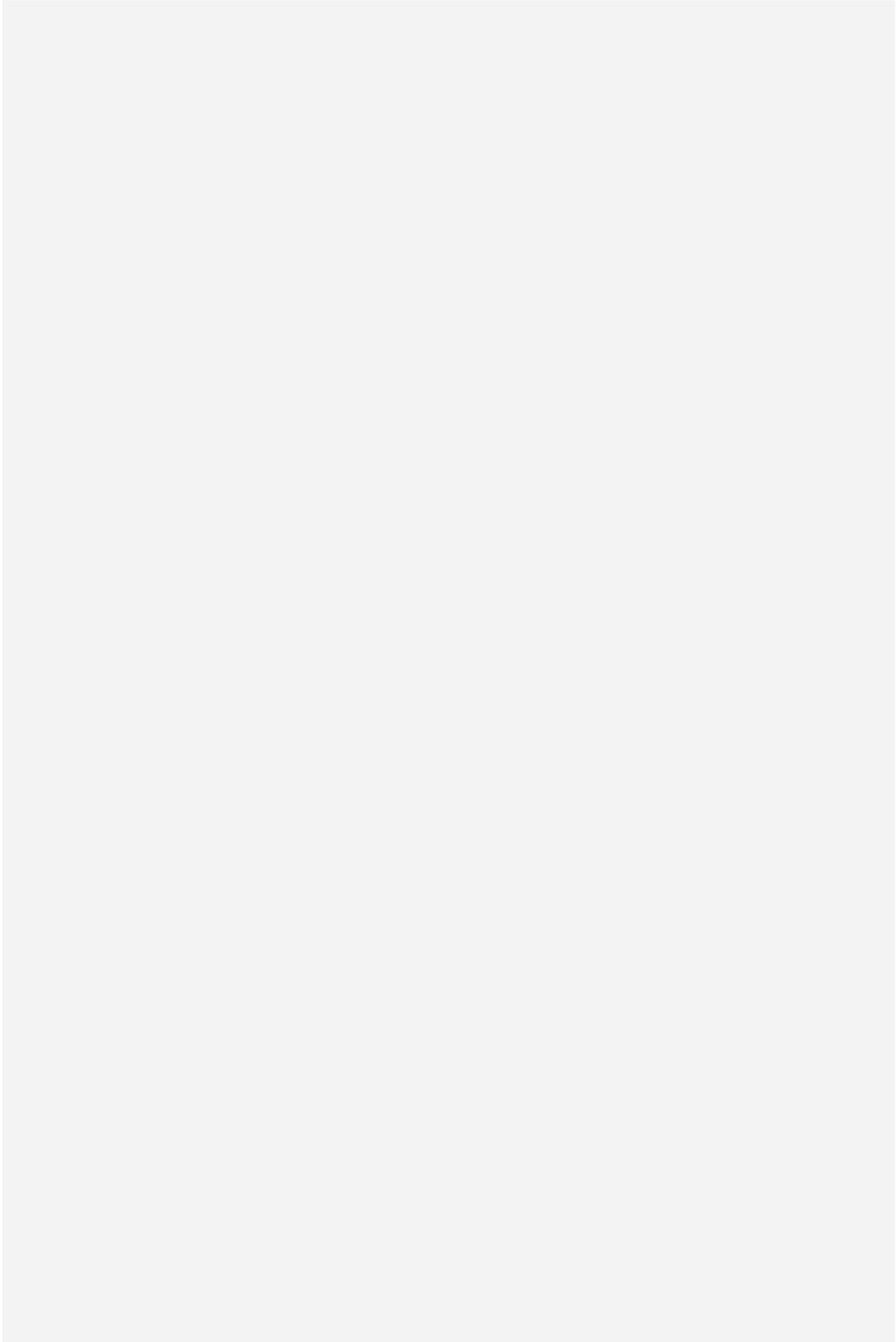
studies or feminist studies, clarify the most important theoretical issues involved in gender difference, gender responsibilities, women's traditional roles, gender oppression, and economic opportunities.

2. Feminist education in colleges and universities seem to be centered in women's studies programs. Examine the catalog of women's studies courses in your college and establish how you think they may constitute a feminist education. What is the program that a student would follow in order to major in women's studies? Which are the most important courses, and how directly do they support feminism?
3. hooks uses the term *feminism* without defining it, probably because she thinks you already have an idea what it means, or perhaps because she feels it may be too complex to define in a short essay. Therefore, after some thought and some research, write a brief essay that defines feminism in a way that you think would satisfy hooks. Bring to bear any classes you may have taken and your conversations with friends and relatives. If you know feminists, ask them to offer a definition that you can use to help explain what feminism is to someone who may not understand the term.
4. Ignoring feminism for a moment, write an essay that explains what hooks calls "sexist socialization" ([para. 6](#)). Sexist socialization implies the ways in which we learn to define genders and gender differences, which begin in grade school and continue through high school and college. Using your own personal experience and the experience of your friends, describe how you have been socialized in relation to gender, and decide whether or not your socialization has indeed been sexist. How would you define sexist socialization?
5. hooks quotes Grace and James Boggs ([para. 11](#)), who talk about revolution as beginning with a philosophy, developing an ideology, and proceeding to politics. In a brief essay explain how feminism has developed a philosophy and ideology and then moved on to political action. How does hooks's essay fit into this pattern? What is her philosophy? How does she express a feminist ideology, what political actions does she recommend, and what political actions has she taken?

6. At the end of her essay, hooks says that the feminist agenda is to “develop an educational methodology that addresses the needs of all women” ([para. 16](#)). What kind of education does that need to be? Describe what for you would constitute a necessary education to satisfy the needs of all women? Do you think you would have to be a woman in order to describe such an education? How would the education you describe affect the men in the lives of such women? Will greater education for women benefit or harm the relations between the sexes?

CONNECTIONS

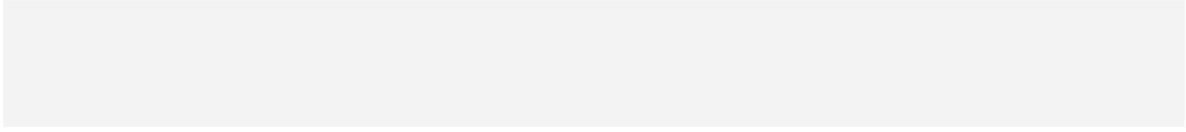
1. Examine Barbara Ehrenreich’s essay, “[Is the Middle Class Doomed?](#)”. Ehrenreich does not talk about education in her essay, but how do her ideas fit in with the concerns of bell hooks? In what ways might the women Ehrenreich discusses have benefited from the kind of education hooks recommends? Would the women Ehrenreich describes be better off if they were feminists? Is it possible that Ehrenreich is a feminist? What concerns does she emphasize that hooks might think important to a feminist agenda? How do these authors reinforce each other’s position?
2. hooks does not mention the concept of ethics when she suggests following a feminist agenda. Read Michael Gazzaniga’s “[Toward a Universal Ethics](#)” and establish how Gazzaniga’s insights into the nature of ethics relate to hooks’s program for improving the literacy and writing skills of undereducated women. In what ways does education, whether designed for women, men, or people in general, become an ethical issue? Describe what you feel are the crucial ethical issues in educating women.



Reflections on the Nature of Education

Now that you have read the selections in Part Four, “Education,” consider how these writers have informed your views of the role of education in your life.

1. What has been the relationship between your education and your career goals?
2. Do you feel something is missing in your education because of emphasis on testing or because of the unavailability of certain subjects you wished to study?
3. Has Howard Gardner’s theory of intelligences helped you understand the way you learn?
4. Has your experience in school revealed instances of gender-linked goals in education?
5. How would you change the way in which your early education was designed?
6. What is your position on the question of charter schools?
7. What are the most important educational goals you have or would have for your own children?
8. Many of the authors in this section argue for more emphasis on the humanities in education. Have they convinced you, or do you feel the humanities should be trimmed in favor of technical education?
9. Which author has made the most convincing argument relating to how education should serve students like you?
10. Should preparing students for the workplace be the primary goal of a modern education?



Part Five ETHICS

ARISTOTLE

HSÜN TZU

W. E. B. DU BOIS

MARY MIDGEY

PHILIPPA FOOT

MICHAEL GAZZANIGA

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH

Introduction

A system of morality which is based on relative emotional values is a mere illusion, a thoroughly vulgar conception which has nothing sound in it and nothing true.

—SOCRATES (469–399 B.C.E.)

God considered not action, but the spirit of the action. It is the intention, not the deed, wherein the merit or praise of the doer consists.

—PETER ABELARD (1079–1142)

If men were born free, they would, so long as they remained free, form no conception of good and evil.

—BARUCH SPINOZA (1632–1677)

All morality depends upon our sentiments; and when any action or quality of the mind pleases us after a certain manner we say it is virtuous; and when the neglect or nonperformance of it displeases us after a like manner, we say that we lie under an obligation to perform it.

—DAVID HUME (1711–1776)

There are no whole truths; all truths are half-truths. It is trying to treat them as whole truths that plays the devil.

—ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD (1861–1947)

To set up as a standard of public morality a notion which can neither be defined nor conceived is to open the door to every kind of tyranny.

—SIMONE WEIL (1909–1943)

Ethics and equity and the principles of justice do not change with the calendar.

—D. H. LAWRENCE (1885–1930)

The establishment of ethical principles that translate into moral behavior constitutes a major step forward for civilization. To be sure, ancient civilizations maintained rules and laws governing behavior, and in some cases those rules were written down and adhered to by the majority of citizens. But the move that major religions made was to go beyond simple rules or laws to penetrate deeper layers of emotion to make people want to behave well toward each other. The writers and writings in this section have all examined the nature of morality and come to interesting conclusions, focusing on various aspects of the ethical nature of humankind.

In the fourth century B.C.E., Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) wrote a treatise on ethics aimed at instructing his son Nicomachus. The *Nicomachean Ethics* is one of the most famous ancient documents that examine the nature of ethical behavior and its effect on the individual. In the selection from the *Ethics* included here, Aristotle focuses on defining the good in life, not in the abstract, but in terms of the individual's obligation to participate in statecraft, or what we might call politics. Aristotle also felt that in a democracy it is everyone's duty to understand the principles by which people can live happily and well. Once he has defined the good, he proceeds to examine the nature of human happiness, and eventually he connects it to "virtuous conduct" ([para. 24](#)). In the process, he examines virtuous conduct in an effort to enlighten his son on the kind of behavior that is likely to reward him with the most happiness and the best life.

Aristotle emphasizes the soul over the body, in the sense that he emphasizes the spiritual over the material world. Reason, his guide, must be followed if we are to live well, but he realizes it is often disregarded. Therefore, he discusses at length the irrational aspects of our minds that affect behavior. In the final analysis, Aristotle argues for a reasonable approach to guiding the individual's behavior with respect for others.

In the third century B.C.E., Hsün Tzu (310–c. 220 B.C.E.) was an important Chinese philosopher associated with courts in several Chinese cities. He taught that people are born with natural traits that lead to immoral behavior. Humanity's nature is evil, and therefore, people must be instructed to follow an ethical and moral path through life. He recommends that the individual should read the teachings of the sages and follow the rituals of the culture. Those rituals are not defined, but they imply proper behavior as established by tradition. Basic human nature leads people to be self-indulgent, self-centered, and committed to sensory pleasure. Therefore, it is clear to Hsün Tzu that an ethical path in life must be regulated by accepting the wisdom and instruction of the elders. As a result, Hsün Tzu is committed to education and recommends a teacher for shaping the individual's nature. In other words, he insists on a moral education for everyone as a means to make people behave ethically toward one another so as to live in a peaceful and harmonious community.

W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963), one of the twentieth century's leading sociologists and essayists, published "The Souls of White Folk" in 1920 as an analysis of the causes of World War I, which

had ended two years before. He demonstrates the role that racism played in the conflict, arguing that European nations were essentially fighting over control of each other's colonies, all of which were nations of "darker" people. The ethical issues of racism become clearer in this essay than in most of what has been written about colonization. Europeans had felt great pity for Belgium, the first nation Germany overran in 1914, but had felt little for the sufferings of the millions of local people killed in the Belgian Congo. Du Bois is unhesitating in his condemnation of European greed and the brutality European nations exhibited in their colonies. Furthermore, he saw clearly that World War I was not the end, but only the beginning, of such global wars.

Mary Midgely (1919–2018), a philosopher concerned with ethical and moral issues, proposes a remarkable problem centering on how we are to understand and judge cultures other than our own. She asks whether it is possible to judge the practices of other cultures if we are not part of those cultures ourselves. If we can praise a culture, can we then criticize it? She asks whether, if we criticize practices in other cultures, it is then appropriate for them to criticize our culture. At the center of the discussion is an ethical problem centering on whether a samurai practice in which a new sword is used to bisect an unsuspecting traveler is allowable or ethical.

Philippa Foot (1920–2010) is interested in virtues and vices and how they raise questions about ethical values that extend from the individual to the community. She identifies four cardinal virtues—courage, temperance, wisdom, and justice—and discusses their

role in our lives. She echoes Aristotle's view that the aim of people is to achieve happiness, and she connects her concept of virtues to that aim. She also identifies and discusses the principal vices, particularly pride, vanity, worldliness, and avarice, which she sees as moral failings. Ultimately, she views virtues as of great value because they are beneficial to the community, while vices are harmful to both individual and the community.

When Michael Gazzaniga (b. 1939) begins his examination of the nature of ethical behavior in "Toward a Universal Ethics," he brings to bear his extensive experience in brain physiology. He has not only dissected brains but has also written extensively about their various features, especially the nature of the separate left and right hemispheres and their special adaptations.

Gazzaniga consults a number of evolutionary neuroscientists who study the brain to see which predilections are inherent. We take the inborn talents of geniuses as examples of brains being "hardwired," but Gazzaniga ponders the possibility that there may be a moral center in the brain and whether, if he is right, there could be a universal ethics that applies to all people regardless of culture or upbringing. In his view, before neuroscience developed a significant knowledge of the functions of the brain, all we knew about ethical and moral philosophy came from people telling stories. These stories are religious and ethical in import, but he argues that they have no scientific basis and that science must be brought to bear on ethics.

Kwame Anthony Appiah (b. 1954) in "If You're Happy and You Know It," talks about the subjective conception of happiness and

asks if it is a feeling or something else. He takes issue with Aristotle's word *eudaimonia*, which is ordinarily translated as happiness. Appiah feels Aristotle means something beyond just feeling happy. He says that when people set very low standards they cannot be well regarded as producing happiness. Aristotle's concept of virtue is important to Appiah, who says that those who get pleasure from giving others pain cannot be said to be happy. If the greatest good is not what we aim for or what we feel we have achieved for ourselves, then we cannot expect to be happy.

Each of these selections offers insights into the ethical underpinnings of modern culture. They clarify the nature of the good and the moral, as well as the ambiguous and the evil. If our ultimate goal is happiness, then the path to that goal must be through ethical and moral behavior.

Some Considerations about the Nature of Ethics

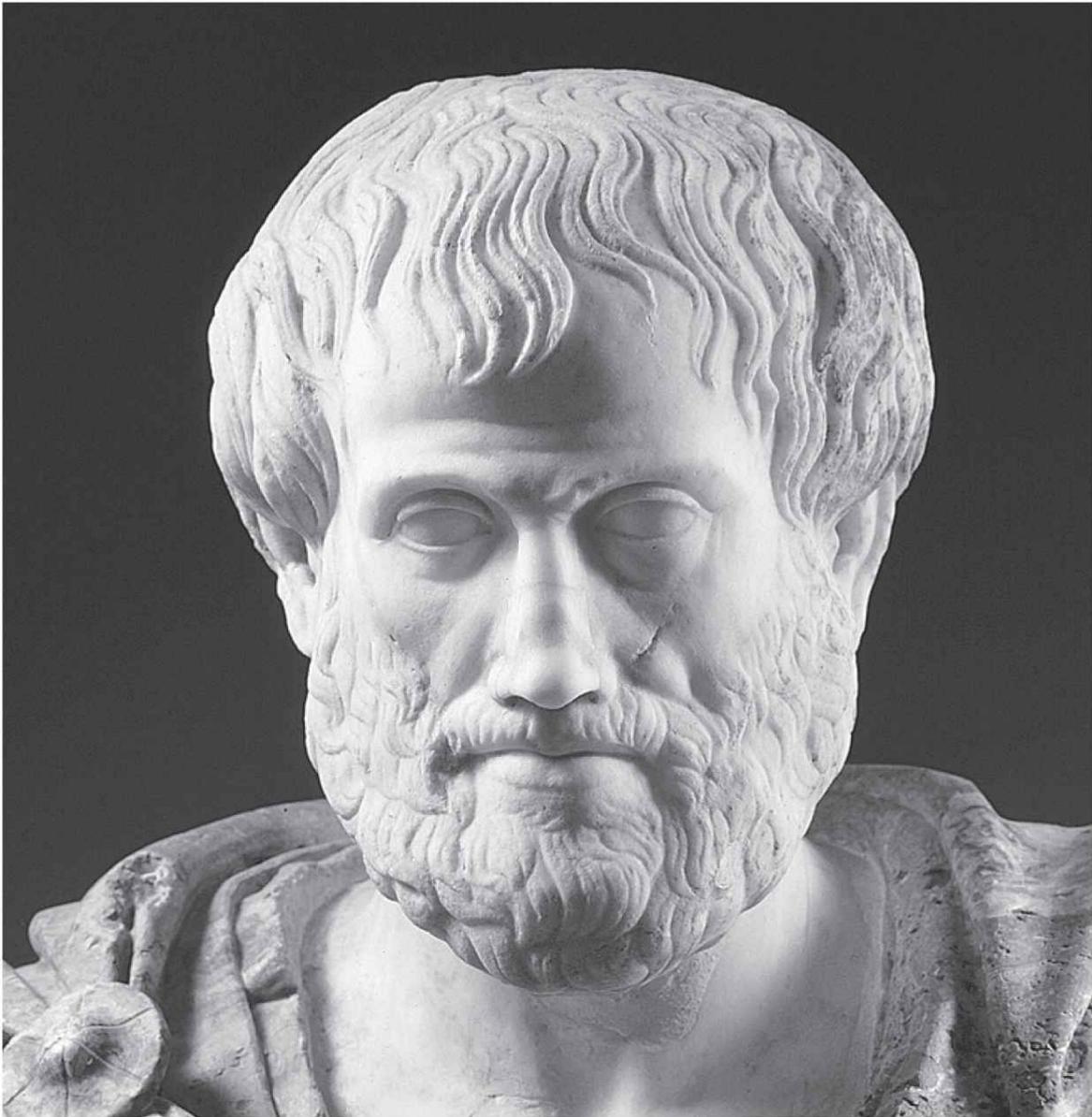
Before reading the selections that follow, consider your views of ethics. Ask yourself the following questions and respond to each in a reading journal. Discuss your answers with your classmates.

1. To what extent does happiness depend on ethical behavior?
2. Are human beings naturally good, or are they naturally bad?
3. What are the ethical issues involved in colonialism?
4. Are ethical principles universal, or do they depend on the customs of various cultures?
5. Does morality depend on religious belief?
6. Is there a difference between ethical behavior and moral behavior?
7. Is ethical behavior built into us through evolution?
8. How do the virtues and vices become ethical concerns?
9. What is the relationship between games we play and our ethical behavior?

10. How does empathy help shape ethical and moral behavior?



Aristotle *The Aim of Man*



Museo Nazionale Romano Rome/Collection Dagli Orti/The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY

ARISTOTLE (384–322 B.C.E.) is the great inheritor of Plato's influence in philosophical thought. He was a student at the Academy of Plato in Athens from age seventeen to thirty-seven, and by all accounts he was Plato's most brilliant pupil. He did not agree with Plato on all issues, however, and seems to have broken with his master around the time of Plato's death (347

B.C.E.). In certain of his writings he disagrees with the Platonists while insisting on his friendship with them. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, for example, the most difficult section (omitted here) demonstrates that Plato is not correct in assuming that the good exists in some ideal form in a higher spiritual realm.

One interesting point concerning Aristotle's career is that when he became a teacher, his most distinguished student was Alexander the Great, the youthful ruler who spread Greek values and laws throughout much of the world. Much speculation has centered on just what Aristotle might have taught Alexander about politics. The emphasis on statecraft and political goals in the *Nicomachean Ethics* suggests that it may have been a great deal. A surviving fragment of a letter from Aristotle to Alexander suggests that he advised Alexander to become the leader of the Greeks and the master of the "barbarians."

The *Nicomachean Ethics* is a difficult document. Aristotle may have written it with an eye to tutoring his son, Nicomachus, but it is also meant to be read by those who have thought deeply about ethical behavior. "The Aim of Man" treats most of the basic issues raised in the entire document. It is difficult primarily because it is so thoroughly abstract. Abstract reason was thought to be the highest form of reason because it is independent of sensory experience and because only humans can indulge in it. Aristotle, whose studies included works on plants, physics, animals, law, rhetoric, and logic, to name only some subjects, reminds us often of what we have in common with the animal and vegetable worlds.

But because he values abstract thought so much, his reasoning demands unusual attention from contemporary readers.

Moreover, because he wrote so much on scientific subjects—and, unlike Plato, emphasized the role of sensory perception in scientific matters—he is careful to warn that reasoning about humankind cannot entail the precision taken for granted in science. That warning is repeated several times in this selection. The study of humankind requires awareness of people's differences of background, education, habit, temperament, and other factors. Such differences impede the kinds of precision of definition and analysis taken for granted in other sciences.

Aristotle reveals an interesting Greek prejudice when he admits that the highest good for humankind is likely to be found in statecraft. He tells us that the well-ordered state—the pride of the Greek way of life—is of such noble value that other values must take second place to it. Because current thought somewhat agrees with this view, Aristotle sounds peculiarly modern in this passage. Unlike Christian, Islamic, or Jewish theorists, Aristotle does not put divinity or godliness first. He is a practical man whose concerns are with the life that human beings know here on earth. When he considers the question, for instance, of whether a man can be thought of as happy before he has died (tragedy can always befall the happy man), he is thoroughly practical and does not point to happiness in heaven as any substitute for happiness on earth.

ARISTOTLE'S RHETORIC

Even though Aristotle is the author of the single most influential treatise on rhetoric, this document does not have as eloquent a style as might be expected, which has suggested to some that the manuscript was taken from the lecture notes of a student. But, of course, Aristotle does use certain minor techniques that demonstrate his awareness of rhetorical effect. He makes careful use of aphorisms—for example, “One swallow does not make a spring” and “Perfect justice is noblest, health is best, / But to gain one’s heart’s desire is pleasantest” ([para. 21](#)).

In terms of style, Aristotle is at a disadvantage—or perhaps the modern world is—because he addresses an audience of those who have thought very deeply on the issues of human behavior, so his style is elevated and complex. Fortunately, nothing he says here is beyond the grasp of the careful reader, although modern readers expect to be provided with a good many concrete examples to help them understand abstract principles. Aristotle purposely avoids using examples so as not to limit too sharply the truths he has to impart.

Aristotle’s most prominent rhetorical technique is definition. His overall goal in this work is to define the aim of man. Thus, the first section of this work is entitled “Definition of the Good.” In “Primacy of Statecraft” he begins to qualify various types of good. Later, he considers the relationship between good and happiness ([paras. 8–9](#)) and the various views concerning happiness and its definition ([paras. 10–11](#)). By then the reader is prepared for a

“Functional Definition of Man’s Highest Good” ([paras. 12–18](#)). He confirms his conclusions in the section entitled “Confirmation by Popular Beliefs” ([paras. 19–22](#)). After isolating happiness as the ultimate good, he devotes [paragraphs 23–32](#) to its causes, its effects, and the events that affect it, such as luck and human decision. The final section ([paras. 33–39](#)) constitutes an examination of the soul (the most human element) and its relationship to virtue; he begins that section by repeating, for the third time, his definition of happiness: “happiness is a certain activity of the soul in accordance with perfect virtue.”

Rhetorically speaking, the body of the work is an exploration and definition of the highest good.



PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Aristotle’s “The Aim of Man.” Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. How does Aristotle define the good?
2. What is the relationship of the good to human happiness?
3. What are the two kinds of human happiness Aristotle discusses?

From the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Martin Ostwald.

The Aim of Man

Definition of the Good

Every art and every “scientific investigation,” as well as every action and “purposive choice,” appears to aim at some good; hence the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim. A difference is observable, to be sure, among the several ends: some of them are activities, while others are products over and above the activities that produce them. Wherever there are certain ends over and above the actions themselves, it is the nature of such products to be better than the activities.

As actions and arts and sciences are of many kinds, there must be a corresponding diversity of ends: health, for example, is the aim of medicine, ships of shipbuilding, victory of military strategy, and wealth of domestic economics. Where several such arts fall under some one faculty—as bridle-making and the other arts concerned with horses’ equipment fall under horsemanship, while this in turn along with all other military matters falls under the head of strategy, and similarly in the case of other arts—the aim of the master art is always more choiceworthy than the aims of its subordinate arts, inasmuch as these are pursued for its sake. And this holds equally good whether the end in view is just the activity itself or something distinct from the activity, as in the case of the sciences above mentioned.

Primacy of Statecraft

If in all our conduct, then, there is some end that we wish on its own account, choosing everything else as a means to it; if, that is to say, we do not choose everything as a means to something else (for at that rate we should go on *ad infinitum*¹ and our desire would be left empty and vain); then clearly this one end must be the good—even, indeed, the highest good. Will not a knowledge of it, then, have an important influence on our lives? Will it not better enable us to hit the right mark, like archers who have a definite target to aim at? If so, we must try to comprehend, in outline at least, what that highest end is, and to which of the sciences or arts it belongs.

Evidently the art or science in question must be the most absolute and most authoritative of all. Statecraft answers best to this description; for it prescribes which of the sciences are to have a place in the state, and which of them are to be studied by the different classes of citizens, and up to what point; and we find that even the most highly esteemed of the arts are subordinated to it, e.g., military strategy, domestic economics, and oratory. So then, since statecraft employs all the other sciences, prescribing also what the citizens are to do and what they are to refrain from doing, its aim must embrace the aims of all the others; whence it follows that the aim of statecraft is man's proper good. Even supposing the chief good to be eventually the same for the individual as for the state, that of the state is evidently of greater and more fundamental importance both to attain and to preserve. The securing of even one individual's good is cause for rejoicing, but

to secure the good of a nation or of a city-state² is nobler and more divine. This, then, is the aim of our present inquiry, which is in a sense the study of statecraft.

Two Observations on the Study of Ethics

Our discussion will be adequate if we are content with as much precision as is appropriate to the subject matter; for the same degree of exactitude ought no more to be expected in all kinds of reasoning than in all kinds of handicraft. Excellence and justice, the things with which statecraft deals, involve so much disagreement and uncertainty that they come to be looked on as mere conventions, having no natural foundation. The good involves a similar uncertainty, inasmuch as good things often prove detrimental: there are examples of people destroyed by wealth, of others destroyed by courage. In such matters, then, and starting from such premises as we do, we must be content with a rough approximation to the truth; for when we are dealing with and starting out from what holds good only “as a general rule,” the conclusions that we reach will have the same character. Let each of the views put forward be accepted in this spirit, for it is the mark of an educated mind to seek only so much exactness in each type of inquiry as may be allowed by the nature of the subject matter. It is equally wrong to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician and to demand strict demonstrations from an orator.

A man judges well and is called a good judge of the things about which he knows. If he has been educated in a particular subject

he is a good judge of that subject; if his education has been well-rounded he is a good judge in general. Hence no very young man is qualified to attend lectures on statecraft; for he is inexperienced in the affairs of life, and these form the data and subject matter of statecraft. Moreover, so long as he tends to be swayed by his feelings he will listen vainly and without profit, for the purport of these [lectures] is not purely theoretical but practical. Nor does it make any difference whether his immaturity is a matter of years or of character: the defect is not a matter of time, but consists in the fact that his life and all his pursuits are under the control of his passions. Men of this sort, as is evident from the case of those we call incontinent,³ do not turn their knowledge to any account in practice; but those whose desires and actions are controlled by reason will derive much profit from a knowledge of these matters.

So much, then, for our prefatory remarks about the student, the manner of inquiry, and the aim.

The Good as Happiness

To resume, then: since all knowledge and all purpose aims at some good, what is it that we declare to be the aim of statecraft; or, in other words, what is the highest of all realizable goods? As to its name there is pretty general agreement: the majority of men, as well as the cultured few, speak of it as happiness; and they would maintain that to live well and to do well are the same thing as to be happy. They differ, however, as to what happiness is, and the mass of mankind give a different account of it from philosophers. The former take it to be something palpable and

obvious, like pleasure or wealth or fame; they differ, too, among themselves, nor is the same man always of one mind about it: when ill he identifies it with health, when poor with wealth; then growing aware of his ignorance about the whole matter he feels admiration for anyone who proclaims some grand ideal above his comprehension. And to add to the confusion, there have been some philosophers who held that besides the various particular good things there is an absolute good which is the cause of all particular goods. As it would hardly be worthwhile to examine all the opinions that have been entertained, we shall confine our attention to those that are most popular or that appear to have some rational foundation.

One point not to be overlooked is the difference between arguments that start from first principles⁴ and arguments that lead up to first principles. Plato very wisely used to raise this question, and to ask whether the right way is from or toward first principles—as in the racecourse there is a difference between running from the judges to the boundary line and running back again. Granted that we must start with what is known, this may be interpreted in a double sense: as what is familiar to us or as what is intelligible in itself. Our own method, at any rate, must be to start with what is familiar to us. That is why a sound moral training is required before a man can listen intelligently to discussions about excellence and justice, and generally speaking, about statecraft. For in this field we must take as our “first principles” plain facts; if these are sufficiently evident we shall not insist upon the whys and wherefores. Such principles are in the possession of, or at any rate readily accessible to, the man with a sound moral

training. As for the man who neither possesses nor can acquire them, let him hear the words of Hesiod:⁵

Best is he who makes his own discoveries;

Good is he who listens to the wise;

But he who, knowing not, rejects another's wisdom

Is a plain fool.

Conflicting Views of Happiness

Let us now resume our discussion from the point at which we digressed. What is happiness, or the chief good? If it is permissible to judge from men's actual lives, we may say that the mass of them, being vulgarians, identify it with pleasure, which is the reason why they aim at nothing higher than a life of enjoyment. For there are three outstanding types of life: the one just mentioned, the political, and, thirdly, the contemplative. "The mass of men" reveal their utter slavishness by preferring a life fit only for cattle; yet their views have a certain plausibility from the fact that many of those in high places share the tastes of Sardanapalus.⁶ Men of superior refinement and active disposition, on the other hand, identify happiness with honor, this being more or less the aim of a statesman's life. It is evidently too superficial, however, to be the good that we are seeking; for it appears to depend rather on him who bestows than on him who receives it, while we may suspect the chief good to be something peculiarly a

man's own, which he is not easily deprived of. Besides, men seem to pursue honor primarily in order to assure themselves of their own merit; at any rate, apart from personal acquaintances, it is by those of sound judgment that they seek to be appreciated, and on the score of virtue. Clearly, then, they imply that virtue is superior to honor: and so, perhaps, we should regard this rather than honor as the end and aim of the statesman's life. Yet even about virtue there is a certain incompleteness; for it is supposed that a man may possess it while asleep or during lifelong inactivity, or even while suffering the greatest disasters and misfortunes; and surely no one would call such a man happy, unless for the sake of a paradox. But we need not further pursue this subject, which has been sufficiently treated of in current discussions. Thirdly, there is the contemplative life, which we shall examine at a later point.

As for the life of money-making, it is something unnatural. Wealth is clearly not the good that we are seeking, for it is merely useful as a means to something else. Even the objects above mentioned come closer to possessing intrinsic goodness than wealth does, for they at least are cherished on their own account. But not even they, it seems, can be the chief good, although much labor has been lost in attempting to prove them so. With this observation we may close the present subject.

Functional Definition of Man's Highest Good

Returning now to the good that we are seeking, let us inquire into its nature. Evidently it is different in different actions and arts: it is not the same thing in medicine as in strategy, and so on. What

definition of good will apply to all the arts? Let us say it is that for the sake of which all else is done. In medicine this is health, in the art of war victory, in building it is a house, and in each of the arts something different, although in every case, wherever there is action and choice involved, it is a certain end; because it is always for the sake of a certain end that all else is done. If, then, there is one end and aim of all our actions, this will be the realizable good; if there are several such ends, these jointly will be our realizable goods. Thus in a roundabout way the discussion has been brought back to the same point as before; which we must now try to explain more clearly.

Happiness seems, more than anything else, to answer to this description: for it is something we choose always for its own sake and never for the sake of something else.

As there is evidently a plurality of ends, and as some of these are chosen only as means to ulterior ends (e.g., wealth, flutes, and instruments in general), it is clear that not all ends are final.⁷ But the supreme good must of course be something final. Accordingly, if there is only one final end, this will be the good that we are seeking; and if there is more than one such end, the most complete and final of them will be this good. Now we call what is pursued as an end in itself more final than what is pursued as a

means to something else; and what is never chosen as a means we call more final than what is chosen both as an end in itself and as a means; in fact, when a thing is chosen always as an end in itself and never as a means we call it absolutely final. Happiness seems, more than anything else, to answer to this description: for it is something we choose always for its own sake and never for the sake of something else; while honor, pleasure, reason, and all the virtues, though chosen partly for themselves (for we might choose any one of them without heeding the result), are chosen also for the sake of the happiness which we suppose they will bring us. Happiness, on the other hand, is never chosen for the sake of any of these, nor indeed as a means to anything else at all.

We seem to arrive at the same conclusion if we start from the notion of self-sufficiency; for the final good is admittedly self-sufficient. To be self-sufficient we do not mean that an individual must live in isolation. Parents, children, wife, as well as friends and fellow citizens generally, are all permissible; for man is by nature political. To be sure, some limit has to be set to such relationships, for if they are extended to embrace ancestors, descendants, and friends of friends, we should go on *ad infinitum*. But this point will be considered later on; provisionally we may attribute self-sufficiency to that which taken by itself makes life choiceworthy and lacking in nothing. Such a thing we conceive happiness to be. Moreover, we regard happiness as the most choiceworthy of all things; nor does this mean that it is merely one good thing among others, for if that were the case it is plain that the addition of even the least of those other goods would increase

its desirability; since the addition would create a larger amount of good, and of two goods the greater is always to be preferred. Evidently, then, happiness is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end and aim of all that we do.

But perhaps it will be objected that to call happiness the supreme good is a mere truism, and that a clearer account of it is still needed. We can give this best, probably, if we ascertain the proper function of man. Just as the excellence and good performance of a flute player, a sculptor, or any kind of artist, and generally speaking of anyone who has a function or business to perform, lies always in that function, so man's good would seem to lie in the function of man, if he has one. But can we suppose that while a carpenter and a cobbler each has a function and mode of activity of his own, man qua man⁸ has none, but has been left by nature functionless? Surely it is more likely that as his several members, eye and hand and foot, can be shown to have each its own function, so man too must have a function over and above the special functions of his various members. What will such a function be? Not merely to live, of course: he shares that even with plants, whereas we are seeking something peculiar to himself. We must exclude, therefore, the life of nutrition and growth. Next comes sentient⁹ life, but this again is had in common with the horse, the ox, and in fact all animals whatever. There remains only the "practical" ¹⁰ life of his rational nature; and this has two aspects, one of which is rational in the sense that it obeys a "rational principle," the other in the sense that it possesses and exercises reason. To avoid ambiguity let us specify that by "rational" we mean the "exercise or activity," not the mere

possession, of reason; for it is the former that would seem more properly entitled to the name. Thus we conclude that man's function is an activity of the soul in conformity with, or at any rate involving the use of, "rational principle."

An individual and a superior individual who belong to the same class we regard as sharing the same function: a harpist and a good harpist, for instance, are essentially the same. This holds true of any class of individuals whatever; for superior excellence with respect to a function is nothing but an amplification of that selfsame function: e.g., the function of a harpist is to play the harp, while that of a good harpist is to play it well. This being so, if we take man's proper function to be a certain kind of life, viz. an activity and conduct of the soul that involves reason, and if it is the part of a good man to perform such activities well and nobly, and if a function is well performed when it is performed in accordance with its own proper excellence; we may conclude that the good of man is an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, or, if there be more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most perfect of them. And we must add, in a complete life. For one swallow does not make a spring, nor does one fine day; and similarly one day or brief period of happiness does not make a man happy and blessed.

So much, then, for a rough outline of the good: the proper procedure being, we may suppose, to sketch an outline first and afterwards to fill in the details. When a good outline has been made, almost anyone presumably can expand it and fill it out; and time is a good inventor and collaborator in this work. It is in just

such a way that progress has been made in the various “human techniques,”¹¹ for filling in the gaps is something anybody can do.

But in all this we must bear constantly in mind our previous warning: not to expect the same degree of precision in all fields, but only so much as belongs to a given subject matter and is appropriate to a particular “type of inquiry.” Both the carpenter and the geometer investigate the right angle, but in different ways: the one wants only such an approximation to it as will serve his work; the other, being concerned with truth, seeks to determine its essence or essential attributes. And so in other subjects we must follow a like procedure, lest we be so much taken up with side issues that we pass over the matter in hand. Similarly we ought not in all cases to demand the “reason why”; sometimes it is enough to point out the bare fact. This is true, for instance, in the case of “first principles”; for a bare fact must always be the ultimate starting point of any inquiry. First principles may be arrived at in a variety of ways: some by induction,¹² some by direct perception, some by a kind of habituation, and others in other ways. In each case we should try to apprehend them in whatever way is proper to them, and we should take care to define them clearly, because they will have a considerable influence upon the subsequent course of our inquiry. A good beginning is more than half of the whole inquiry, and once established clears up many of its difficulties.

Confirmation by Popular Beliefs

It is important to consider our ethical “first principle” not merely as a conclusion drawn from certain premises, but also in its relation to popular opinion; for all data harmonize with a true principle, but with a false one they are soon found to be discordant. Now it has been customary to divide good things into three classes: external goods on the one hand, and on the other goods of the soul and goods of the body; and those of the soul we call good in the highest sense, and in the fullest degree. “Conscious actions,” i.e., “active expressions of our nature,” we take, of course, as belonging to the soul; and thus our account is confirmed by the doctrine referred to, which is of long standing and has been generally accepted by students of philosophy...

We are in agreement also with those who identify happiness with virtue or with some particular virtue; for our phrase “activity in accordance with virtue” is the same as what they call virtue. It makes quite a difference, however, whether we conceive the supreme good as the mere possession of virtue or as its employment—i.e., as a state of character or as its active expression in conduct. For a state of character may be present without yielding any good result, as in a man who is asleep or in some other way inactive; but this is not true of its active expression, which must show itself in action, indeed in good action. As at the Olympic games it is not merely the fairest and strongest that receive the victory wreath, but those who compete (since the victors will of course be found among the competitors), so in life too those who carry off the finest prizes are those who manifest their excellence in their deeds.

Moreover, the life of those active in virtue is intrinsically pleasant. For besides the fact that pleasure is something belonging to the soul, each man takes pleasure in what he is said to love—the horse lover in horses, the lover of sights in public spectacles, and similarly the lover of justice in just acts, and more generally, the lover of virtue in virtuous acts. And while most men take pleasure in things which, as they are not truly pleasant by nature, create warring factions in the soul, the lovers of what is noble take pleasure in things that are truly pleasant in themselves. Virtuous actions are things of this kind; hence they are pleasant for such men, as well as pleasant intrinsically. The life of such men, therefore, requires no adventitious¹³ pleasures, but finds its own pleasure within itself. This is further shown by the fact that a man who does not enjoy doing noble actions is not a good man at all: surely no one would call a man just who did not enjoy performing just actions, nor generous who did not enjoy performing generous actions, and so on. On this ground too, then, actions in conformity with virtue must be intrinsically pleasant. And certainly they are good as well as noble, and both in the highest degree, if the judgment of the good man is any criterion; for he will judge them as we have said. It follows, therefore, that happiness is at once the best and noblest and pleasantest of things, and that these attributes are not separable as the inscription at Delos¹⁴ pretends:

Perfect justice is noblest, health is best,

But to gain one's heart's desire is pleasantest.

For our best activities possess all of these attributes; and it is in our best activities, or in the best one of them, that we say happiness consists.

Nevertheless, happiness plainly requires external goods as well; for it is impossible, or at least not easy, to act nobly without the proper equipment. There are many actions that can only be performed through such instruments as friends, wealth, or political influence; and there are some things, again, the lack of which must mar felicity, such as good birth, fine children, and personal comeliness: for the man who is repulsive in appearance, or ill-born, or solitary and childless does not meet the requirements of a happy man, and still less does one who has worthless children and friends, or who has lost good ones by death. As we have said, then, happiness seems to require the addition of external prosperity, and this has led some to identify it with “good fortune,” just as others have made the opposite mistake of identifying it with virtue.

Sources of Happiness

For the same reason there are many who wonder whether happiness is attained by learning, or by habituation or some other kind of training, or whether it comes by some divine dispensation,¹⁵ or even by chance. Well, certainly if the gods do give any gifts to men we may reasonably suppose that happiness is god-given; indeed, of all human blessings it is the most likely to be so, inasmuch as it is the best of them all. While this question no doubt belongs more properly to another branch of inquiry, we

remark here that even if happiness is not god-sent but comes as a result of virtue or some kind of learning or training, still it is evidently one of the most divine things in the world, because that which is the reward as well as the end and aim of virtuous conduct must evidently be of supreme excellence, something divine and most blessed. If this is the case, happiness must further be something that can be generally shared; for with the exception of those whose capacity for virtue has been stunted or maimed, everyone will have the ability, by study and diligence, to acquire it. And if it is better that happiness should be acquired in this way than by chance, we may reasonably suppose that it happens so; because everything in nature is arranged in the best way possible—just as in the case of man-made products, and of every kind of causation, especially the highest. It would be altogether wrong that what is greatest and noblest in the world should be left to the dispensation of chance.

Our present difficulty is cleared up by our previous definition of happiness, as a certain activity of the soul in accordance with virtue; whereas all other sorts of good are either necessary conditions of, or cooperative with and naturally useful instruments of this. Such a conclusion, moreover, agrees with the proposition we laid down at the outset: that the end of statecraft is the best of all ends, and that the principal concern of statecraft is to make the citizens of a certain character—namely, good and disposed to perform noble actions.

Naturally, therefore, we do not call an ox or a horse or any other brute happy, since none of them is able to participate in conduct of

this kind. For the same reason a child is not happy, since at his age he too is incapable of such conduct. Or if we do call a child happy, it is in the sense of predicting for him a happy future. Happiness, as we have said, involves not only a completeness of virtue but also a complete lifetime for its fulfillment. Life brings many vicissitudes and chance happenings, and it may be that one who is now prosperous will suffer great misfortunes in his old age, as is told of Priam¹⁶ in the Trojan legends; and a man who is thus buffeted by fortune and comes to a miserable end can scarcely be called happy.

Happiness and the Vicissitudes of Fortune

Are we, then, to call no one happy while he lives? Must we, as Solon¹⁷ advises, wait to see his end? And if we accept this verdict, are we to interpret it as meaning that a man actually becomes happy only after he is dead? Would not this be downright absurd, especially for us who define happiness as a kind of vital activity? Or if we reject this interpretation, and suppose Solon to mean rather that it is only after death, when beyond the reach of further evil and calamity that a man can safely be said to have been happy during his life, there is still a possible objection that may be offered. For many hold that both good and evil may in a certain sense befall a dead man (just as they may befall a living man even when he is unconscious of them)—e.g., honors and disgraces, and the prosperity or misfortune of his children and the rest of his descendants. And this presents a further problem: suppose a man to have lived to a happy old age, and to have ended as he lived, there are still

plenty of reverses that may befall his descendants—some of them will perhaps lead a good life and be dealt with by fortune as they deserve, others not. (It is clear, too, that a man's relationship to his descendants admits of various degrees.) It would be odd, then, if the dead man were to change along with the fortunes of his descendants, becoming happy and miserable by turns; although, to be sure, it would be equally odd if the fortunes of his descendants did not affect him at all, even for a brief time.

But let us go back to our earlier question,¹⁸ which may perhaps clear up the one we are raising at present. Suppose we agree that we must look to the end of a man's life, and only then call him happy, not because he then *is* happy but because we can only then know him to have been so: Is it not paradoxical to have refused to call him happy during just the period when happiness was present to him? On the other hand, we are naturally loath to apply the term to living men, considering the vicissitudes to which they are liable. Happiness, we argue, must be something that endures without any essential change, whereas a living individual may experience many turns of fortune's wheel. Obviously if we judge by his changing fortunes we shall have to call the same man now happy, now wretched, thereby regarding the happy man as a kind of chameleon and his happiness as built on no secure foundation; yet it surely cannot be right to regard a man's happiness as wholly dependent on his fortunes. True good and evil are not of this character; rather, as we have said, although good fortune is a necessary adjunct to a complete human life, it is virtuous activities that constitute happiness, and the opposite sort of activities that constitute its opposite.

For none of man's functions is so permanent as his virtuous activities—indeed, many believe them to be more abiding even than a knowledge of the sciences.

The foregoing difficulty [that happiness can be judged of only in retrospect] confirms, as a matter of fact, our theory. For none of man's functions is so permanent as his virtuous activities—indeed, many believe them to be more abiding even than a knowledge of the sciences; and of his virtuous activities those are the most abiding which are of highest worth, for it is with them that anyone blessed with supreme happiness is most fully and most continuously occupied, and hence never oblivious of. The happy man, then, will possess this attribute of permanence or stability about which we have been inquiring, and will keep it all his life; because at all times and in preference to everything else he will be engaged in virtuous action and contemplation, and he will bear the changes of fortune as nobly and in every respect as decorously as possible, inasmuch as he is truly good and “four-square beyond reproach.”¹⁹

But the dispensations of fortune are many, some great, others small. Small ones do not appreciably turn the scales of life, but a multitude of great ones, if they are of the nature of blessings, will make life happier; for they add to life a grace of their own, provided that a man makes noble and good use of them. If,

however, they are of an evil kind, they will crush and maim happiness, in that they bring pain and thereby hinder many of our natural activities. Yet true nobility shines out even here, if a multitude of great misfortunes be borne with calmness—not, to be sure, with the calmness of insensibility, but of nobility and greatness of soul.

If, as we have declared, it is our activities that give life its character, then no happy man can become miserable, inasmuch as he will never do what is hateful or base. For we hold that the truly good and wise man will bear with dignity whatever fortune sends, and will always make the best of his circumstances, as a good general makes the most effective use of the forces at his command, and a good shoemaker makes the best shoes out of the leather that is available, and so in the case of the other crafts. On this interpretation, the happy man can never become miserable—although of course he will not be blessed with happiness in the full sense of the word if he meets with such a fate as Priam's. At all events, he is not variable and always changing; for no ordinary misfortunes but only a multitude of great ones will dislodge him from his happy state, and should this occur he will not readily recover his happiness in a short time, but only, if at all, after a long period has run its course, during which he has achieved distinctions of a high order.

Is there any objection, then, to our defining a happy man as one whose activities are an expression of complete virtue, and who at the same time enjoys a sufficiency of worldly goods, not just for some limited period, but for his entire lifetime? Or perhaps we had

better add the proviso that he shall be destined to go on living in this manner, and die as he has lived; for, whereas the future is obscure to us, we conceive happiness to be an end, something altogether and in every respect final and complete. Granting all this, we may declare those living men to be “blessed with supreme happiness” in whom these conditions have been and are continuing to be fulfilled. Their blessedness, however, is of human order.

So much for our discussion of this question.

Derivation of the Two Kinds of Human Excellence

Since happiness is a certain activity of the soul in accordance with perfect virtue, we must next examine the nature of virtue. Not only will such an inquiry perhaps clarify the problem of happiness; it will also be of vital concern to the true student of statecraft, whose aim is to make his fellow citizens good and law-abiding. The Cretan and Spartan lawgivers,²⁰ as well as such others as may have resembled them, exemplify this aim. And clearly, if such an inquiry has to do with statecraft, it will be in keeping with our original purpose to pursue it.

It goes without saying that the virtue we are to study is human virtue, just as the good that we have been inquiring about is a human good, and the happiness a human happiness. By human virtue we mean virtue not of the body but of the soul, and by happiness too we mean an activity of the soul. This being the case, it is no less evident that the student of statecraft must have

some knowledge of the soul, than that a physician who is to heal the eye or the whole body must have some knowledge of these organs; more so, indeed, in proportion as statecraft is superior to and more honorable than medicine. Now all physicians who are educated take much pains to know about the body. Hence as students of statecraft, too, we must inquire into the nature of the soul; but we must do so with reference to our own distinctive aim and only to the extent that it requires, for to go into minuter detail would be more laborious than is warranted by our subject matter.

We may adopt here certain doctrines about the soul that have been adequately stated in our public discourses:²¹ as that the soul may be distinguished into two parts, one of which is irrational while the other possesses reason. Whether these two parts are actually distinct like the parts of the body or any other divisible thing, or are distinct only in a logical sense, like convex and concave in the circumference of a circle, is immaterial to our present inquiry.

Of the irrational part, again, one division is apparently of a vegetative nature and common to all living things: I mean that which is the cause of nutrition and growth. It is more reasonable to postulate a vital faculty of this sort, present in all things that take nourishment, even when in an embryo stage, and retained by the full-grown organism, than to assume a special nutritive faculty in the latter. Hence we may say that the excellence belonging to this part of the soul is common to all species, and not specifically human: a point that is further confirmed by the popular view that this part of the soul is most active during sleep. For it is during

sleep that the distinction between good men and bad is least apparent; whence the saying that for half their lives the happy are no better off than the wretched. This, indeed, is natural enough, for sleep is an inactivity of the soul in those respects in which the soul is called good or bad. (It is true, however, that to a slight degree certain bodily movements penetrate to the soul; which is the reason why good men's dreams are superior to those of the average person.) But enough of this subject: let us dismiss the nutritive principle, since it has by nature no share in human excellence.

There seems to be a second part of the soul, which though irrational yet in some way partakes of reason. For while we praise the rational principle and the part of the soul that manifests it in the case of the continent and incontinent man alike, on the ground that it exhorts them rightly and urges them to do what is best; yet we find within these men another element different in nature from the rational element, and struggling against and resisting it. Just as ataxic limbs,²² when we choose to move them to the right, turn on the contrary to the left, so it is with the soul: the impulses of the incontinent man run counter to his ruling part. The only difference is that in the case of the body we see what it is that goes astray, while in the soul we do not. Nevertheless the comparison will doubtless suffice to show that there is in the soul something besides the rational element, opposing and running counter to it. (In what sense the two elements are distinct is immaterial.) But this other element, as we have said, seems also to have some share in a rational principle: at any rate, in the continent man it submits to reason, while in the man who is at once temperate and

courageous it is presumably all the more obedient; for in him it speaks on all matters harmoniously with the voice of reason.

Evidently, then, the irrational part of the soul is twofold. There is the vegetative element, which has no share in reason, and there is the concupiscent,²³ or rather the appetitive element, which does in a sense partake of reason, in that it is amenable and obedient to it: i.e., it is rational in the sense that we speak of “having *logos* of” [paying heed to] father and friends, not in the sense of “having *logos* of” [having a rational understanding of] mathematical truths. That this irrational element is in some way amenable to reason is shown by our practice of giving admonishment, and by rebuke and exhortation generally. If on this account it is deemed more correct to regard this element as also possessing reason, then the rational part of the soul, in turn, will have two subdivisions: the one being rational in the strict sense as actually possessing reason, the other merely in the sense that a child obeys its father.

Virtue, too, is differentiated in accordance with this division of the soul: for we call some of the virtues intellectual and others moral: wisdom, understanding, and sagacity being among the former, liberality and temperance among the latter. In speaking of a man’s character we do not say that he is wise or intelligent, but that he is gentle or temperate; yet we praise the wise man too for the disposition he has developed within himself, and praiseworthy dispositions we call virtues.

1. Define the following terms: *good, virtue, honor, happiness, truth, soul, body*.
2. In the first paragraphs of the selection, Aristotle talks about aims and ends. What does he mean by these terms?
3. Do you feel that Aristotle's view of the relationship of virtue to happiness is as relevant today as he argued it was in his day?
4. What is Aristotle's attitude toward most people?
5. What characteristics can we assume about the audience for whom Aristotle writes?
6. In what senses is the selection modern? In what senses is it antique or dated?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Aristotle discusses the virtuous life in this selection. How would you apply his views to your own life? What ethical issues is Aristotle pointing us toward in this essay? To what extent does his guidance translate to modern life? Explain.
2. In his section on the primacy of statecraft, Aristotle makes a number of assertions regarding the relationship of the happiness of the individual to the welfare (or happiness) of the state. Clarify as much as possible the relationship of the individual's happiness to that of the state. How can a state be happy? Is the term relevant to anything other than an individual? Does Aristotle think that the individual's interests should be subservient to that of the state?
3. In [paragraph 15](#), Aristotle talks about the function of man. Relying on that discussion and other aspects of the work, write your own version of "The Function of Man." Be sure to use *man* as a collective term for both men and women. Once you have clarified the function of man, establish the connection between function and happiness. Is it true that the best-functioning person will be the happiest person? Aristotle

implies that it is not enough to be, say, honorable or noble, but that one must act honorably or nobly. Is the implication true?

4. Take Aristotle's definition, "Happiness is a certain activity of the soul in accordance with perfect virtue." Define it in terms that are clear not only to you but also to your peers. Take care to include each part of the definition: "certain activity" (or lack of it), "soul" (which in modern terms may be "personality" or "psyche"), "in accordance with," "perfect virtue." You may rely on any parts of the selection that can be of help, but be sure to use the topic of definition to guide you through the selection. You certainly may disagree with Aristotle or amplify aspects of his definitions. In one sense, you will be defining *happiness* for yourself and your times.
5. In his "confirmation by popular beliefs" ([para. 19](#) and following), Aristotle talks about the good. He mentions three classes of good, ranking them in order from lowest to highest: external goods, goods of the body, and goods of the soul. Using concrete examples, define each of these classes of good. Do you agree with Aristotle's order? Do you think that your peers agree with it? Where possible, give examples to help establish the validity of your opinion. Finally, do you think that our society in general puts the same value on these three classes of good that Aristotle does? Again, use examples where possible.
6. Analyze the following quotations from the selection, taking a stand on the question of whether or not Aristotle is generally correct in his assertion about the aim of man:

It is in our best activities, or in the best one of them, that we say happiness consists. ([para. 22](#))

A man who does not enjoy doing noble actions is not a good man at all. ([para. 21](#))

Even supposing the chief good to be eventually the same for the individual as for the state, that of the state is evidently of greater and more fundamental importance both to attain and to preserve. ([para. 4](#))

In life...those who carry off the finest prizes are those who manifest their excellence in their deeds. ([para. 20](#))

If, as we have declared, it is our activities that give life its character, then no happy man can become miserable, inasmuch as he will never do what is hateful or base. ([para. 31](#))

 CONNECTIONS

1. Write an essay in which you define happiness by comparing Aristotle's views with those in [Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence](#). Compare their attitudes toward material and spiritual happiness as well as their attitudes toward political freedom and the need for possessions. What does Aristotle leave out that Jefferson feels is important?
2. Aristotle discusses virtues and the virtuous life. Compare Aristotle's concept of virtues with [Philippa Foot's "Virtues and Vices."](#) description of virtues. Foot identifies the primary virtues as courage, temperance, justice, charity, and wisdom. What virtues does Aristotle identify? Foot states that her thinking is based on Aristotle's views. In what ways are their views similar, and in what ways are they different? Do their ideas differ because there are more than 2,000 years between them, or do you believe their ideas are unaffected by their historical ages?



Hsün Tzu *Man's Nature Is Evil*



China: Xun Kuang, also known as Xun Zi (c.313–238 BCE), Confucian scholar of the Warring States Period (403–221 BCE)/
PICTURES FROM HISTORY/Bridgeman Images

HSÜN TZU (310–c. 220 B.C.E.), also known as Xunzi, was born in interesting and tumultuous times to a moderately aristocratic family in the small state of Chao in the northeast of China. Hsün Tzu means “Master Hsün,” and at birth, his family name was Hsün K’uang. His education centered on the writings of the sages of ancient China and a study of Confucian doctrine. The era in China

from 453 to 221 B.C.E. is known as the period of the Warring States, during which frequent conflicts arose between competing states. China was not unified until 221 B.C.E., when one of Hsün Tzu's former students, Li Ssu, aided the first emperor of the authoritarian Ch'in Dynasty, ironically enough by using oppressive methods that Hsün Tzu would have opposed.

Hsün Tzu is first mentioned by early biographers at age fifty, when he was living in the state of Ch'i where, because of the policies of its governor, many of China's great early philosophers practiced. In terms of the era and the collection of thinkers, the state of Ch'i was comparable to ancient Athens. The doctrines of Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.) had taken root and were interpreted by major figures such as Mencius (372–289 B.C.E.), who became chief interpreter. Like Confucius, Mencius held that human nature was fundamentally good, and he credited a deity with power over the world with a positive moral drive.

Hsün Tzu, however, took a very different stance. He felt that the forces of heaven that Mencius promoted were actually the forces of nature and that there was no divine force operating within nature. He did not credit prayer with any coincidental outcome (such as the sun coming out after one prayed for sunshine). Further, Hsün Tzu became famous for declaring that human nature was evil, somewhat in line with the Christian religion's concept of original sin. The result of his dissension was a bitter disagreement with Mencius, who held the reigning philosophical view of the period. Hsün Tzu came to be considered unorthodox, and his work was widely neglected during his life. He seems to

have spent time in the three major states of the period—Ch'i, Ch'in, and Ch'u—but late in life, when he returned to Ch'i after having lived in its rival state Ch'in, he found himself unwelcome and ultimately retired to Ch'u, where he died.

Despite his philosophy being out of favor, Hsün Tzu's works were exceptionally well preserved. They were edited in 818 C.E. by a court scholar who collected all the individual writings and gathered them into thirty-two sections—an edition that survives today. It is not known whether every one of the sections was written by Hsün Tzu himself, but twenty-five sections are unquestionably authentic. His view that human nature was evil was based on his conviction that following one's natural instincts would almost certainly lead one to an unhappy life. Yet, he also maintained that we are born without any moral leanings or moral knowledge. As a result, Hsün Tzu insisted that we must study the writings of the classics and the sages; that we must follow the Way (the Tao), the path that leads to peace and understanding; and that we must use the rituals of the ancients as aids in self-perfection. As a result, Hsün Tzu is well known for placing great emphasis on education as a lifelong pursuit.

HSÜN TZU'S RHETORIC

Hsün Tzu is a very careful writer who understands language and the principles of rhetoric. He relies on analogy and simile to a much greater extent than the other authors in this book. For example, in [paragraph 2](#), he points to the fact that warped wood needs to be straightened just as blunt metal must be sharpened.

These are analogies for his theory that the nature of a person must be shaped and formed by a teacher or a social order. He uses this analogy again and adds, in [paragraph 6](#), the potter and the carpenter, who both shape a material into a desirable form. People, he insists, must also be shaped into a desirable form because, as he tells us often, “man’s nature is evil and...his goodness is the result of conscious activity” ([para. 5](#)).

The important point is that Hsün Tzu links instruction to the achievement of moral perfection. Because he feels that our natural inclinations may lead us astray, we need the discipline of rituals to help us achieve moral perfection. Otherwise, we will lose our way. We will follow our instincts and become materialistic and “petty men” marked by bad behavior and an inclination toward a sensual and selfish life. Like Aristotle, Tzu associates wisdom with virtue and living the good life with pursuing good rather than evil.

Most of the Confucian doctrines and teachers in Hsün Tzu’s time were optimistic because they assumed that people are born with a moral character that will lead them to a virtuous life. But Hsün Tzu thought that the sensory life of nature would veer toward immorality and evil behavior resulting from pride, envy, lust, and fear. Following the teachings of the sages, then, is the antidote to an undisciplined life. Hsün Tzu recommends that we follow established ritual and, in the process, accrue learning and wisdom. By his own reckoning, the man who does not attend the rituals is not much different from a beast because that man, like all animals, gives in to his natural inclinations, which Hsün Tzu sees as leading to degradation and moral destruction. For Hsün Tzu,

following the instruction of the sages is the means of becoming truly human, of becoming a moral person bent on achieving wisdom and true happiness.

Because Hsün Tzu disagrees with Mencius, his essay constitutes an argument in which he attempts to prove that man's nature is evil. He repeats statements such as, "From this it is obvious, then, that man's nature is evil, and that his goodness is the result of conscious activity" ([paras. 5, 9, 10, 12](#), etc.). Repetition is a powerful rhetorical strategy when handled carefully. The reason he uses it here is that each statement concludes a brief logical analysis. For example, in [paragraph 9](#), Hsün Tzu says that "An understanding of ritual principles is not a part of man's original nature," and therefore, he must be instructed in them. If they are good principles and lead to an ethical life, that proves he began without an ethical understanding—hence, human nature is evil.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Hsün Tzu's "Man's Nature Is Evil." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. Why does Hsün Tzu say man's nature is evil?
2. How will proper rituals and the teachings of the sages correct man's evil nature?
3. How does Hsün Tzu describe "conscious activity"?

From *Hsun Tzu: Basic Writings*. Translated by Burton Watson.

Man's Nature Is Evil

Man's nature is evil; goodness is the result of conscious activity. The nature of man is such that he is born with a fondness for profit. If he indulges this fondness, it will lead him into wrangling and strife, and all sense of courtesy and humility will disappear. He is born with feelings of envy and hate, and if he indulges these, they will lead him into violence and crime, and all sense of loyalty and good faith will disappear. Man is born with the desires of the eyes and ears, with a fondness for beautiful sights and sounds. If he indulges these, they will lead him into license and wantonness, and all ritual principles and correct forms will be lost. Hence, any man who follows his nature and indulges his emotions will inevitably become involved in wrangling and strife, will violate the forms¹ and rules of society, and will end as a criminal. Therefore, man must first be transformed by the instructions of a teacher and guided by ritual principles, and only then will he be able to observe the dictates of courtesy and humility, obey the forms and rules of society, and achieve order. It is obvious from this, then, that man's nature is evil, and that his goodness is the result of conscious activity.

A warped piece of wood must wait until it has been laid against the straightening board, steamed, and forced into shape before it can become straight; a piece of blunt metal must wait until it has been whetted on a grindstone before it can become sharp. Similarly, since man's nature is evil, it must wait for the instructions of a teacher before it can become upright, and for the

guidance of ritual principles before it can become orderly. If men have no teachers to instruct them, they will be inclined towards evil and not upright; and if they have no ritual principles to guide them, they will be perverse and violent and lack order. In ancient times the sage kings realized that man's nature is evil, and that therefore he inclines toward evil and violence and is not upright or orderly. Accordingly they created ritual principles and laid down certain regulations in order to reform man's emotional nature and make it upright, in order to train and transform it and guide it in the proper channels. In this way they caused all men to become orderly and to conform to the Way. Hence, today any man who takes to heart the instructions of his teacher, applies himself to his studies, and abides by ritual principles may become a gentleman, but anyone who gives free rein to his emotional nature, is content to indulge his passions, and disregards ritual principles becomes a petty man. It is obvious from this, therefore, that man's nature is evil, and that his goodness is the result of conscious activity.

Mencius states that man is capable of learning because his nature is good, but I say that this is wrong. It indicates that he has not really understood man's nature nor distinguished properly between the basic nature and conscious activity. The nature is that which is given by Heaven; you cannot learn it, you cannot acquire it by effort. Ritual principles, on the other hand, are created by sages; you can learn to apply them, you can work to bring them to completion. That part of man which cannot be learned or acquired by effort is called the nature; that part of him which can be acquired by learning and brought to completion by

effort is called conscious activity. This is the difference between nature and conscious activity.

It is a part of man's nature that his eyes can see and his ears can hear. But the faculty of clear sight can never exist separately from the eye, nor can the faculty of keen hearing exist separately from the ear. It is obvious, then, that you cannot acquire clear sight and keen hearing by study. Mencius states that man's nature is good, and that all evil arises because he loses his original nature. Such a view, I believe, is erroneous. It is the way with man's nature that as soon as he is born he begins to depart from his original naïveté and simplicity, and therefore he must inevitably lose what Mencius regards as his original nature.² It is obvious from this, then, that the nature of man is evil.

Those who maintain that the nature is good praise and approve whatever has not departed from the original simplicity and naïveté of the child. That is, they consider that beauty belongs to the original simplicity and naïveté and goodness to the original mind in the same way that clear sight is inseparable from the eye and keen hearing from the ear. Hence, they maintain that [the nature possesses goodness] in the same way that the eye possesses clear vision or the ear keenness of hearing. Now it is the nature of man that when he is hungry he will desire satisfaction, when he is cold he will desire warmth, and when he is weary he will desire rest. This is his emotional nature. And yet a man, although he is hungry, will not dare to be the first to eat if he is in the presence of his elders, because he knows that he should yield to them, and although he is weary, he will not dare to demand rest because he

knows that he should relieve others of the burden of labor. For a son to yield to his father or a younger brother to yield to his elder brother, for a son to relieve his father of work or a younger brother to relieve his elder brother—acts such as these are all contrary to man's nature and run counter to his emotions. And yet they represent the way of filial piety and the proper forms enjoined by ritual principles. Hence, if men follow their emotional nature, there will be no courtesy or humility; courtesy and humility in fact run counter to man's emotional nature. From this it is obvious, then, that man's nature is evil, and that his goodness is the result of conscious activity.

Someone may ask: if man's nature is evil, then where do ritual principles come from? I would reply: all ritual principles are produced by the conscious activity of the sages; essentially they are not products of man's nature. A potter molds clay and makes a vessel, but the vessel is the product of the conscious activity of the potter, not essentially a product of his human nature. A carpenter carves a piece of wood and makes a utensil, but the utensil is the product of the conscious activity of the carpenter, not essentially a product of his human nature. The sage gathers together his thoughts and ideas, experiments with various forms of conscious activity, and so produces ritual principles and sets forth laws and regulations. Hence, these ritual principles and laws are the products of the conscious activity of the sage, not essentially products of his human nature.

Phenomena such as the eye's fondness for beautiful forms, the ear's fondness for beautiful sounds, the mouth's fondness for

delicious flavors, the mind's fondness for profit, or the body's fondness for pleasure and ease—these are all products of the emotional nature of man. They are instinctive and spontaneous; man does not have to do anything to produce them. But that which does not come into being instinctively but must wait for some activity to bring it into being is called the product of conscious activity. These are the products of the nature and of conscious activity respectively, and the proof that they are not the same. Therefore, the sage transforms his nature and initiates conscious activity; from this conscious activity he produces ritual principles, and when they have been produced he sets up rules and regulations. Hence, ritual principles and rules are produced by the sage. In respect to human nature the sage is the same as all other men and does not surpass³ them; it is only in his conscious activity that he differs from and surpasses other men.

It is man's emotional nature to love profit and desire gain. Suppose now that a man has some wealth to be divided.⁴ If he indulges his emotional nature, loving profit and desiring gain, then he will quarrel and wrangle even with his own brothers over the division. But if he has been transformed by the proper forms of ritual principle, then he will be capable of yielding even to a complete stranger. Hence, to indulge the emotional nature leads to the quarreling of brothers, but to be transformed by ritual principles makes a man capable of yielding to strangers.

Every man who desires to do good does so precisely because his nature is evil. ... Whatever a man lacks in himself he will seek outside.

Every man who desires to do good does so precisely because his nature is evil. A man whose accomplishments are meager longs for greatness; an ugly man longs for beauty; a man in cramped quarters longs for spaciousness; a poor man longs for wealth; a humble man longs for eminence. Whatever a man lacks in himself he will seek outside. But if a man is already rich, he will not long for wealth, and if he is already eminent, he will not long for greater power. What a man already possesses in himself he will not bother to look for outside. From this we can see that men desire to do good precisely because their nature is evil. Ritual principles are certainly not a part of man's original nature. Therefore, he forces himself to study and to seek to possess them. An understanding of ritual principles is not a part of man's original nature, and therefore he ponders and plans and thereby seeks to understand them. Hence, man in the state in which he is born neither possesses nor understands ritual principles. If he does not possess ritual principles, his behavior will be chaotic, and if he does not understand them, he will be wild and irresponsible. In fact, therefore, man in the state in which he is born possesses this tendency towards chaos and irresponsibility. From this it is

obvious, then, that man's nature is evil, and that his goodness is the result of conscious activity.

Mencius states that man's nature is good, but I say that this view is wrong. All men in the world, past and present, agree in defining goodness as that which is upright, reasonable, and orderly, and evil as that which is prejudiced, irresponsible, and chaotic. This is the distinction between good and evil. Now suppose that man's nature was in fact intrinsically upright, reasonable, and orderly—then what need would there be for sage kings and ritual principles? The existence of sage kings and ritual principles could certainly add nothing to the situation. But because man's nature is in fact evil, this is not so. Therefore, in ancient times the sages, realizing that man's nature is evil, that it is prejudiced and not upright, irresponsible and lacking in order, for this reason established the authority of the ruler to control it, elucidated ritual principles to transform it, set up laws and standards to correct it, and meted out strict punishments to restrain it. As a result, all the world achieved order and conformed to goodness. Such is the orderly government of the sage kings and the transforming power of ritual principles. Now let someone try doing away with the authority of the ruler, ignoring the transforming power of ritual principles, rejecting the order that comes from laws and standards, and dispensing with the restrictive power of punishments, and then watch and see how the people of the world treat each other. He will find that the powerful impose upon the weak and rob them, the many terrorize the few and extort from them, and in no time the whole world will be given up to chaos and mutual destruction. It is obvious from this, then, that man's

nature is evil, and that his goodness is the result of conscious activity.

Those who are good at discussing antiquity must demonstrate the validity of what they say in terms of modern times; those who are good at discussing Heaven must show proofs from the human world. In discussions of all kinds, men value what is in accord with the facts and what can be proved to be valid. Hence if a man sits on his mat propounding some theory, he should be able to stand right up and put it into practice, and show that it can be extended over a wide area with equal validity. Now Mencius states that man's nature is good, but this is neither in accord with the facts, nor can it be proved to be valid. One may sit down and propound such a theory, but he cannot stand up and put it into practice, nor can he extend it over a wide area with any success at all. How, then, could it be anything but erroneous?

If the nature of man were good, we could dispense with sage kings and forget about ritual principles. But if it is evil, then we must go along with the sage kings and honor ritual principles. The straightening board is made because of the warped wood; the plumb line is employed because things are crooked; rulers are set up and ritual principles elucidated because the nature of man is evil. From this it is obvious, then, that man's nature is evil, and that his goodness is the result of conscious activity. A straight piece of wood does not have to wait for the straightening board to become straight; it is straight by nature. But a warped piece of wood must wait until it has been laid against the straightening board, steamed, and forced into shape before it can become

straight, because by nature it is warped. Similarly, since man's nature is evil, he must wait for the ordering power of the sage kings and the transforming power of ritual principles; only then can he achieve order and conform to goodness. From this it is obvious, then, that man's nature is evil, and that his goodness is the result of conscious activity.

Someone may ask whether ritual principles and concerted conscious activity are not themselves a part of man's nature, so that for that reason the sage is capable of producing them. But I would answer that this is not so. A potter may mold clay and produce an earthen pot, but surely molding pots out of clay is not a part of the potter's human nature. A carpenter may carve wood and produce a utensil, but surely carving utensils out of wood is not a part of the carpenter's human nature. The sage stands in the same relation to ritual principles as the potter to the things he molds and produces. How, then, could ritual principles and concerted conscious activity be a part of man's basic human nature?

As far as human nature goes, the sages Yao and Shun possessed the same nature as the tyrant Chieh or Robber Chih, and the gentleman possesses the same nature as the petty man. Would you still maintain, then, that ritual principles and concerted conscious activity are a part of man's nature? If you do so, then what reason is there to pay any particular honor to Yao, Shun,⁵ or the gentleman? The reason people honor Yao, Shun, and the gentleman is that they are able to transform their nature, apply themselves to conscious activity, and produce ritual principles.

The sage, then, must stand in the same relation to ritual principles as the potter to the things he molds and produces. Looking at it this way, how could ritual principles and concerted conscious activity be a part of man's nature? The reason people despise Chieh, Robber Chih, or the petty man is that they give free rein to their nature, follow their emotions, and are content to indulge their passions, so that their conduct is marked by greed and contentiousness. Therefore, it is clear that man's nature is evil, and that his goodness is the result of conscious activity.

Heaven did not bestow any particular favor upon Tseng Tzu, Min Tzu-ch'ien, or Hsiao-i that it withheld from other men.⁶ And yet these three men among all others proved most capable of carrying out their duties as sons and winning fame for their filial piety. Why? Because of their thorough attention to ritual principles. Heaven has not bestowed any particular favor upon the inhabitants of Ch'i and Lu which it has withheld from the people of Ch'in. And yet when it comes to observing the duties of father and son and the separation of roles between husband and wife, the inhabitants of Ch'in cannot match the filial reverence and respect for proper form which marks the people of Ch'i and Lu.⁷ Why? Because the people of Ch'in give free rein to their emotional nature, are content to indulge their passions, and are careless of ritual principles. It is certainly not due to any difference in human nature between the two groups.

The man in the street can become a Yü.⁸ What does this mean? What made the sage emperor Yü a Yü, I would reply, was the fact that he practiced benevolence and righteousness and abided by

the proper rules and standards. If this is so, then benevolence, righteousness, and proper standards must be based upon principles which can be known and practiced. Any man in the street has the essential faculties needed to understand benevolence, righteousness, and proper standards, and the potential ability to put them into practice. Therefore it is clear that he can become a Yü.

Would you maintain that benevolence, righteousness, and proper standards are not based upon any principles that can be known and practiced? If so, then even a Yü could not have understood or practiced them. Or would you maintain that the man in the street does not have the essential faculties needed to understand them or the potential ability to put them into practice? If so, then you are saying that the man in the street in his family life cannot understand the duties required of a father or a son and in public life cannot comprehend the correct relationship between ruler and subject. But in fact this is not true. Any man in the street *can* understand the duties required of a father or a son and *can* comprehend the correct relationship between ruler and subject. Therefore, it is obvious that the essential faculties needed to understand such ethical principles and the potential ability to put them into practice must be a part of his make-up. Now if he takes these faculties and abilities and applies them to the principles of benevolence and righteousness, which we have already shown to be knowable and practicable,⁹ then it is obvious that he can become a Yü. If the man in the street applies himself to training and study, concentrates his mind and will, and considers and examines things carefully, continuing his efforts over a long period

of time and accumulating good acts without stop, then he can achieve a godlike understanding and form a triad with Heaven and earth. The sage is a man who has arrived where he has through the accumulation of good acts.

You have said, someone may object, that the sage has arrived where he has through the accumulation of good acts. Why is it, then, that everyone is not able to accumulate good acts in the same way? I would reply: everyone is capable of doing so, but not everyone can be made to do so. The petty man is capable of becoming a gentleman, yet he is not willing to do so; the gentleman is capable of becoming a petty man but he is not willing to do so. The petty man and the gentleman are perfectly capable of changing places; the fact that they do not actually do so is what I mean when I say that they are capable of doing so but they cannot be made to do so. Hence, it is correct to say that the man in the street is *capable* of becoming a Yü but it is not necessarily correct to say that he will in fact find it possible to do so. But although he does not find it possible to do so does not prove that he is incapable of doing so.

A person with two feet is theoretically capable of walking to every corner of the earth, although in fact no one has ever found it possible to do so. Similarly, the artisan, the carpenter, the farmer, and the merchant are theoretically capable of exchanging professions, although in actual practice they find it impossible to do so. From this we can see that, although someone may be theoretically capable of becoming something, he may not in practice find it possible to do so. But although he does not find it

possible to do so, this does not prove that he is not capable of doing so. To find it practically possible or impossible to do something and to be capable or incapable of doing something are two entirely different things. It is perfectly clear, then, that a man is theoretically capable of becoming something else.¹⁰

Yao asked Shun, “What are man’s emotions like?” Shun replied, “Man’s emotions are very unlovely things indeed! What need is there to ask any further? Once a man acquires a wife and children, he no longer treats his parents as a filial son should. Once he succeeds in satisfying his cravings and desires, he neglects his duty to his friends. Once he has won a high position and a good stipend, he ceases to serve his sovereign with a loyal heart. Man’s emotions, man’s emotions—they are very unlovely things indeed! What need is there to ask any further? Only the worthy man is different from this.”¹¹

There is the understanding of the sage, the understanding of the gentleman and man of breeding, the understanding of the petty man, and the understanding of the menial. He speaks many words but they are graceful and well ordered; all day he discourses on his reasons, employing a thousand different and varied modes of expression, and yet all that he says is united around a single principle: such is the understanding of the sage. He speaks little but what he says is brief and to the point, logical and clearly presented, as though laid out with a plumb line: such is the understanding of the gentleman and man of breeding. His words are all flattery, his actions irresponsible; whatever he does is shot through with error: such is the understanding of the petty

man. His words are rapid and shrill but never to the point; his talents are varied and many but of no practical use; he is full of subtle distinctions and elegant turns of phrase that serve no practical purpose; he ignores right or wrong, disdains to discuss crooked or straight, but seeks only to overpower the arguments of his opponent: such is the understanding of the menial.¹²

There is superior valor, there is the middle type of valor, and there is inferior valor. When proper standards prevail in the world, to dare to bring your own conduct into accord with them; when the Way of the former kings prevails, to dare to follow its dictates; to refuse to bow before the ruler of a disordered age, to refuse to follow the customs of the people of a disordered age; to accept poverty and hardship if they are in the cause of benevolent action; to reject wealth and eminence if they are not consonant with benevolent action; if the world recognizes you, to share¹³ in the world's joys; if the world does not recognize you, to stand alone and without fear: this is superior valor. To be reverent in bearing and modest in intention; to value honor and make light of material goods; to dare to promote and honor the worthy, and reject and cast off the unworthy: such is the middle type of valor. To ignore your own safety in the quest for wealth; to make light of danger and try to talk your way out of every difficulty; to rely on lucky escapes; to ignore right and wrong, just and unjust, and seek only to overpower the arguments of your opponents: such is inferior valor.

Fan-jo and Chü-shu were famous bows of ancient times, but if they had not first been subjected to presses and straighteners,

they would never have become true of themselves. Ts'ung of Duke Huan of Ch'i, Ch'üch of T'ai-kung of Ch'i, Lu of King Wen of the Chou, Hu of Lord Chuang of Ch'u, and Kan-chiang, Mo-yeh, Chü-ch'üeh, and Pi-lü of King Ho-lü of Wu were all famous swords of antiquity, but if they had not been subjected to the grindstone, they would never have become sharp, and if men of strength had not wielded them, they would never have been able to cut anything. Hua-liu, Ch'i-chi, Hsien-li, and Lu-erh were famous horses of antiquity, but if they had not been subjected to the restraint of bit and bridle and the threat of the whip, and driven by a master driver like Tsao-fu, they would never have succeeded in traveling a thousand *li* in one day.

In the same way a man, no matter how fine his nature or how keen his mind, must seek a worthy teacher to study under and good companions to associate with. If he studies under a worthy teacher, he will be able to hear about the ways of Yao, Shun, Yü, and T'ang, and if he associates with good companions, he will be able to observe conduct that is loyal and respectful. Then, although he is not aware of it, he will day by day progress in the practice of benevolence and righteousness, for the environment he is subjected to will cause him to progress. But if a man associates with men who are not good, then he will hear only deceit and lies and will see only conduct that is marked by wantonness, evil, and greed. Then, although he is not aware of it, he himself will soon be in danger of severe punishment, for the environment he is subjected to will cause him to be in danger. An old text says, "If you do not know a man, look at his friends; if you

do not know a ruler, look at his attendants.” Environment is the important thing! Environment is the important thing!

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What are the sages?
2. What does a son owe to his father?
3. What role do the emotions play in the life of a gentleman?
4. What is a petty man?
5. What does Mencius believe about human nature?
6. Why does Hsün Tzu introduce the analogy of the potter and the carpenter?
7. What is Hsün Tzu's antidote to human nature?
8. What is the difference between nature and conscious activity?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

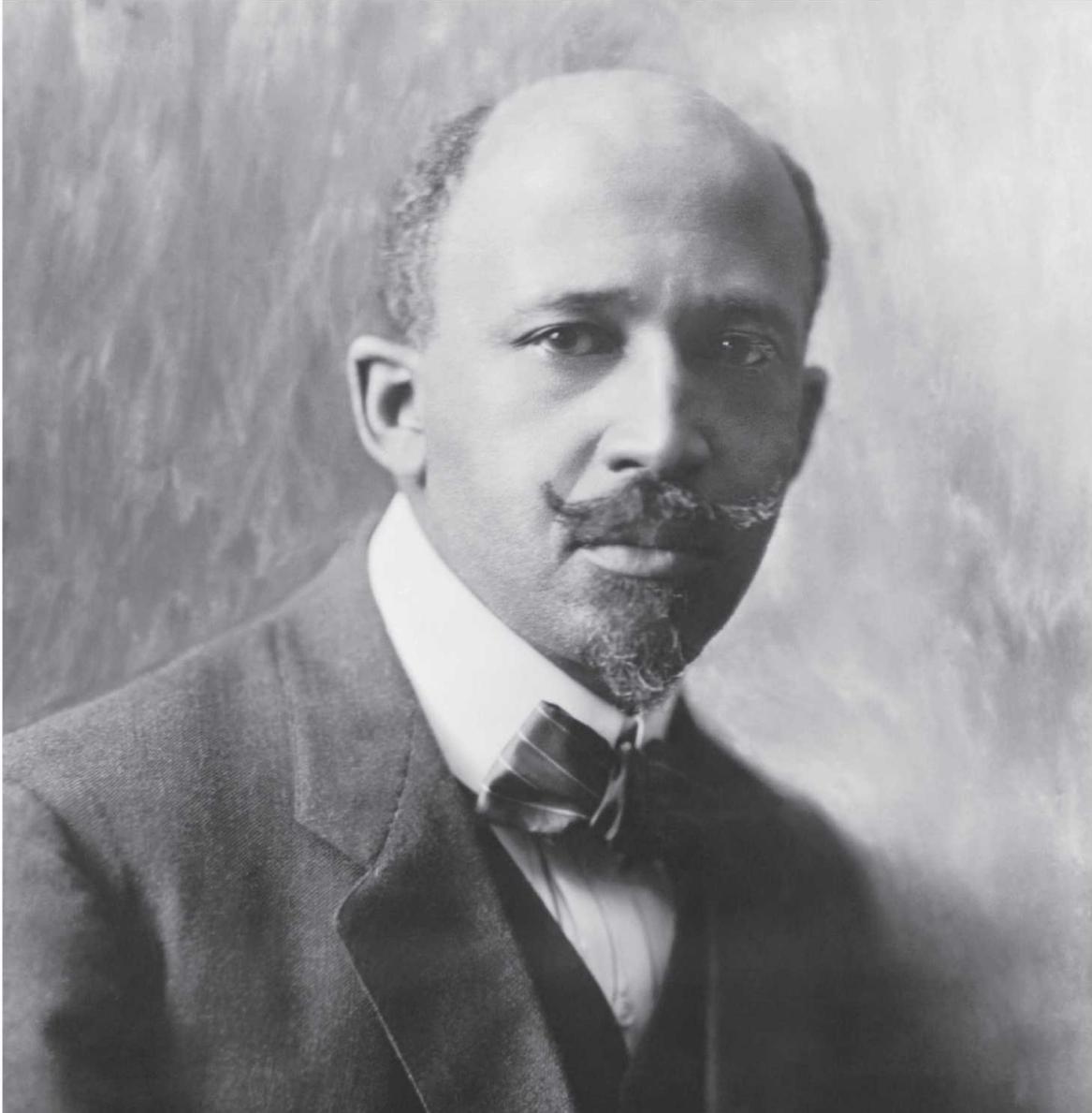
1. Hsün Tzu is creating an argument here to defend his view of human nature. How effective is his argument? In an essay that either defends or attacks his ideas, clarify the strengths and the weaknesses of his argument. What for you are the strongest positions that may convince a reader of his views? Which positions seem the weakest and least convincing? Are you in general agreement with him about how to shape an ethical life?
2. In a brief essay, explain why you feel Hsün Tzu is either a pessimist or an optimist. To what extent is it clear that in our current society his views are held widely? To what extent are his views deemed irrelevant in today's world? Do you find yourself optimistic about the way people live today? Use examples from your own environment when writing about optimism or pessimism.

3. If you followed Hsün Tzu’s teaching, how close would you be to living an ethical life? What are the ethical issues that Hsün Tzu establishes in his essay? What does he want you to do, and why? What would be the result of your paying close attention to his teachings and following his advice? In what ways would your “nature” be altered if you were to do as he says and pay attention to the rituals of your elders?
4. In [paragraph 7](#), Hsün Tzu discusses “Phenomena such as the eye’s fondness for beautiful forms,” and he sees in them a problem for anyone who wishes to overcome instincts and the nature that he claims is evil. However, some modern philosophers see the quest for beauty as a means of discovering a spiritual understanding of the world. Examine what Hsün Tzu says about this and take a stand. How important is Hsün Tzu’s warning? Are you particularly susceptible to the fondness he describes?
5. Hsün Tzu often tells us “the sage transforms his nature and initiates conscious activity; from this conscious activity he produces ritual principles, and when they have been produced he sets up rules and regulations” ([para. 7](#)). He does not tell us what the ritual principles or rules and regulations of his time are. What are they for you today? What ritual principles have you been instructed in and practice to make yourself a better person? What rules and regulations help improve your nature?
6. The essay ends with a powerful statement: “Environment is the important thing! Environment is the important thing!” ([para. 24](#)). Sociologists today talk a great deal about environment and its shaping of the individual. What is your view about how the environment affects an individual’s ethical views? If human nature is evil, why would Hsün Tzu think environment is so important? He talks about associating with “men who are not good” ([para. 24](#)) resulting in one’s own bad behavior. If this a reasonable assumption, what is the best thing a person can do to try to live an ethical life?

1. Hsün Tzu presents an argument to convince you to shape your own basic nature by living an ethical life. Aristotle ("[The Aim of Man](#)") does much the same, but these two sages have different starting points and different attitudes. Examine their arguments and identify how they agree with each other and how they are different. Is one pessimistic and one optimistic, or are they both pessimistic or optimistic? Which of them gives you the most useful advice? Which of them seems to be speaking most productively to you?
2. Decide whether or not Michael Gazzaniga's essay [Toward a Universal Ethics](#) supports Hsün Tzu's views about the evil nature of people. Here are some questions you might consider as you address this: What does Gazzaniga say that would bolster Hsün's ideas about virtues and vices in the life of ordinary people? Which of these two writers has the most convincing argument about the role of virtue and vice in our lives? How much of Gazzaniga's research demonstrates that Hsün is wrong? Does Gazzaniga believe people are basically good or basically evil? Do you find yourself agreeing with Hsün or Gazzaniga? Would Hsün Tzu accept the view that people's ethical behavior is hardwired in our brains? How does your personal point of view on these issues color your activity with other people?



W. E. B. Du Bois *The Souls of White Folk*



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WILLIAM EDWARD BURGHARDT DU BOIS (1868–1963), born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, grew to become one of the nation's premier intellectuals. He was a prominent teacher, writer, and lecturer involved with the earliest foundation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) as

well as the Harlem Renaissance, whose great writers—among them Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Jean Toomer, and Zora Neale Hurston—as well as musicians and artists considered him an essential force. Although he was a powerful influence in these and other movements in the African American community, he had a prickly personality and was sometimes described as distant and “above it all.” His reputed preference for the “high culture” of Beethoven and other classical composers over the jazz of 1920s Harlem is a case in point. Throughout his life, his views were intellectually elevated and serious, and he held himself to high ethical standards.

His origins were relatively humble. His mother was a maid, and his father did not stay with the family. She had a stroke at a relatively young age, meaning that Du Bois had to help support the family by taking part-time jobs. His family helped, as did some neighbors, but it was always difficult to get by. Fortunately, his education in Great Barrington was very good, and his teachers recognized, as did he himself, that he was an unusually bright student. They placed him in the classical program leading to a college degree. After graduating from high school in 1885, he went to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. Fisk was established in 1865 to educate freed African Americans, and his time there gave Du Bois not only his first taste of the segregated South but also his first experiences in a predominantly African American community. His years in Nashville later inspired his book *Darkwater* (1920). Written when he was fifty, it is a gathering of personal writings, essays, poems, and memoirs and was a means by which he sought to understand his place in the world.

After graduating from Fisk in three years, Du Bois went to Harvard and stayed to earn his Ph.D. in History in 1895, the first Harvard doctorate awarded to an African American. He published his dissertation, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America: 1638–1870*, in 1896. While working on his doctorate, Du Bois studied for a time at the University of Berlin. When at Harvard he had met many important modern thinkers, such as William James and George Santayana, and in Germany he was influenced by scholars such as Gustav von Schmoller in the relatively new science of sociology. He began his teaching at Wilberforce University in Ohio but soon moved to the University of Pennsylvania and published several important books in the field of sociology: *The Study of the Negro Problems* (1898), *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), *The Negro in Business* (1899), and a few years later his most famous book, the more personal *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).

Most of these books were written while Du Bois was teaching at Atlanta University, where he stayed for ten years. His project during this time was to write a definitive study of the sociology of African Americans. *The Souls of Black Folk* attracted attention because one of its chapters essentially challenges the received opinions of Booker T. Washington, then a major influence on African American education. Du Bois criticized him for, as he viewed it, essentially accepting segregation and the status quo in the South, instead insisting that blacks should strive for full social and political equality. While Booker T. Washington seemed to preach a doctrine of people raising themselves up by their bootstraps, Du Bois developed a view of what he called “the

Talented Tenth,” a group of black intellectuals who he felt would lead African Americans to realize their potential. Ultimately, his dispute made Du Bois visible to a larger community and led eventually to his co-founding of the NAACP.

As editor of the major publication of the NAACP, *Crisis*, Du Bois made considerable efforts to publish the finest African American writers in America. But he also used *Crisis* as a personal pulpit to express his views about racial issues. He repeatedly affirmed that there was no fundamental physical difference between the races and that a doctrine of equality must be practiced in America. In *Crisis*, Du Bois was able to reach a large audience of primarily African American readers, and his subjects ranged from religion to politics and beyond. He took sides in every major debate of the period and was considered a “preceptor” to the African American community. Du Bois was looked to for his opinion on things as distinct as the Russo-Japanese War, the Russian Revolution, Marcus Garvey’s “back to Africa” campaign, and blues and jazz. In the late 1930s, he visited Nazi Germany and protested the treatment of Jews, which he said was a crime against civilization. He was a noted Zionist, in part as a result of his experiences in Germany.

His influence waned during the late 1920s and through the Depression-era 1930s, in part because he disapproved of much of the artistic work of the Harlem Renaissance, which itself experienced a decline during the Great Depression. He was viewed by some as old-school and out of step with younger writers. However, Du Bois remained a major force in American

intellectual life. He continued publishing novels and books, such as *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880* (1935), *Black Folk, Then and Now* (1939), and *I Take My Stand for Peace* (1951). During the McCarthy Communist witch-hunt era of the early 1950s, Du Bois's international connections brought him under suspicion and his passport was suspended. Because he had, since the beginning of the century, been involved in Pan-African and other international congresses with varied political goals, he was suspected of being a Communist sympathizer and found himself limited in his movements. Eventually, in 1961, the president of the newly independent Ghana invited Du Bois to come and help create an encyclopedia of Africana. Just before Du Bois left America, he conspicuously joined the American Communist Party, accepted Ghanaian citizenship, and, with his wife, moved to Accra, where he died in 1963.

DU BOIS'S RHETORIC

Reprinted below is *The Souls of White Folk*, an essay that appeared in the well-reviewed *Darkwater*. The tone of the essay is controlled, but soon it becomes clear that Du Bois was deeply angered by the white domination of people of color around the world. One thing that makes this essay so powerful is his analysis of the reason for World War I and his conclusion—only two years after the war was over—that there would be another war unless Europe could find a way to stop colonial exploitation around the world. He makes a strong case for why Germany, which had been unified for only a short time, envied England's colonial wealth enough to be willing to go to war. At the time, Germany had

colonies in Africa, but they produced much less wealth than the Belgian-occupied Congo or England's colonial territories in Egypt, India, Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, and Somaliland.

While he centers most of his critique of racial superiority on whites in Europe, he also examines the claims of Americans to support the democratic ideals of the constitution and finds them to be false promises. Democracy for black people, he says, is a failure. He goes so far as to declare that "America has marched proudly in the van of human hatred" ([para. 59](#)). And he goes on to say "She stands today shoulder to shoulder with Europe in Europe's worst sin against civilization." These are strong words, which he supports through his examination of the European caste system that privileges whiteness over any other skin color. He also supports his argument by citing evidence of condoned lynching, murder, and unjust treatment of blacks in the United States. In the process of this condemnation, Du Bois examines the historical circumstances and notes that in the early modern period, before the eighteenth century, color was less racialized. He connects this shift in the early eighteenth century to the acceleration of Europe's period of colonization and subsequent need to justify the domination of millions of people of color around the world.

His essay begins with a metaphor that echoes that of Montaigne, who, like Du Bois, centered himself in a tower from which he could survey a broad landscape of history and activity. He uses metaphor throughout the essay, perhaps most powerfully when he describes World War I as the period when Europe descended into hell ([para. 17](#)). In [paragraph 10](#) Du Bois invokes a metaphor of

drama when he refers to comedy and tragedy. In [paragraph 12](#) he metaphorizes hatred as rising up “through the foam of green and weltering waters.”

The structure of the essay is based on treating a series of issues. After discussing ancient history, suggesting that the Greeks and Romans were not racists, Du Bois moves on to religion. He proclaims a religion of whiteness and then alludes to slavery, writing that “to free the slave is discovered to be tolerable only in so far as it freed his master!” ([para. 8](#)). White philanthropy, he points out, is content to help black people until they insist “on the human right to swagger and swear and waste” ([para. 10](#)); then white anger rises.

His examination of religion continues in [paragraph 20](#) when he says “A nation’s religion is its life, and as such white Christianity is a miserable failure.” But in the same paragraph he also recognizes that people of color have also failed, but they have not claimed superiority in the same sense that whites have done. He moves on to discuss economics, saying that “History is economic history” ([para. 23](#)), and then discussing the fairness of trade and the exploitation of colonies like the Congo. When discussing war he condemns powerful nations using machine guns against indigenous tribal people. He also mentions Belgium, which had in 1914 drawn sympathy from the Allies during its conquest by Germany—then he reminds the reader that Belgium owned the Congo and killed more than twelve million indigenous people over the years of its control. Europe sympathized with Belgium but gave no thought to the Congo.

Eventually, Du Bois discusses labor issues, writing that the subjection of the white working classes cannot much longer be maintained ([para. 42](#)) and explaining his support for labor unions, which were developing at the time. He viewed capitalism as one of the driving forces of racism and supported socialism throughout his life. At the end of his life, under attack from the McCarthy committee, he joined the Communist party, moved to Ghana, and died in Accra. The ferocity of this essay was a result of the horrors he saw in his own country and the exploitation of people of color throughout the world by the Europeans.

He began the essay saying he was clairvoyant, and he ended the essay predicting another war also based on colonialism and racism; less than twenty years later Nazi Germany declared a belief in the “master race” of Aryan white people and went to war to expand its land and re-acquire its colonies. All his life Du Bois saw racism as a murderous scourge.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of W. E. B. Du Bois’s “The Souls of White Folk.” Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. How has Europe treated its colonies?
2. How did racism express itself in Du Bois’s time?
3. What is the role of trade and commerce in colonialism?

The Souls of White Folk

High in the tower, where I sit above the loud complaining of the human sea, I know many souls that toss and whirl and pass, but none there are that intrigue me more than the Souls of White Folk.

Of them I am singularly clairvoyant. I see in and through them. I view them from unusual points of vantage. Not as a foreigner do I come, for I am native, not foreign, bone of their thought and flesh of their language. Mine is not the knowledge of the traveler or the colonial composite of dear memories, words and wonder. Nor yet is my knowledge that which servants have of masters, or mass of class, or capitalist of artisan. Rather I see these souls undressed and from the back and side. I see the working of their entrails. I know their thoughts and they know that I know. This knowledge makes them now embarrassed, now furious! They deny my right to live and be and call me misbirth! My word is to them mere bitterness and my soul, pessimism. And yet as they preach and strut and shout and threaten, crouching as they clutch at rags of facts and fancies to hide their nakedness, they go twisting, flying by my tired eyes and I see them ever stripped,—ugly, human.

The discovery of personal whiteness among the world's peoples is a very modern thing,—a nineteenth and twentieth century matter, indeed. The ancient world would have laughed at such a distinction. The Middle Age regarded skin color with mild curiosity; and even up into the eighteenth century we were hammering our national manikins into one, great, Universal Man, with fine frenzy

which ignored color and race even more than birth. Today we have changed all that, and the world in a sudden, emotional conversion has discovered that it is white and by that token, wonderful!

This assumption that of all the hues of God whiteness alone is inherently and obviously better than brownness or tan leads to curious acts; even the sweeter souls of the dominant world as they discourse with me on weather, weal, and woe are continually playing above their actual words an obligato of tune and tone, saying:

“My poor, un-white thing! Weep not nor rage. I know, too well, that the curse of God lies heavy on you. Why? That is not for me to say, but be brave! Do your work in your lowly sphere, praying the good Lord that into heaven above, where all is love, you may, one day, be born—white!”

I do not laugh. I am quite straight-faced as I ask soberly:

“But what on earth is whiteness that one should so desire it?”
Then always, somehow, some way, silently but clearly, I am given to understand that whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen!

Now what is the effect on a man or a nation when it comes passionately to believe such an extraordinary dictum as this? That nations are coming to believe it is manifest daily. Wave on wave, each with increasing virulence, is dashing this new religion of

whiteness on the shores of our time. Its first effects are funny: the strut of the Southerner, the arrogance of the Englishman amuck, the whoop of the hoodlum who vicariously leads your mob. Next it appears dampening generous enthusiasm in what we once counted glorious; to free the slave is discovered to be tolerable only in so far as it freed his master! Do we sense somnolent writhings in black Africa or angry groans in India or triumphant banzais in Japan? "To your tents, O Israel!" These nations are not white!

After the more comic manifestations and the chilling of generous enthusiasm come subtler, darker deeds. Everything considered, the title to the universe claimed by White Folk is faulty. It ought, at least, to look plausible. How easy, then, by emphasis and omission to make children believe that every great soul the world ever saw was a white man's soul; that every great thought the world ever knew was a white man's thought; that every great deed the world ever did was a white man's deed; that every great dream the world ever sang was a white man's dream. In fine, that if from the world were dropped everything that could not fairly be attributed to White Folk, the world would, if anything, be even greater, truer, better than now. And if all this be a lie, is it not a lie in a great cause?

Here it is that the comedy verges to tragedy. The first minor note is struck, all unconsciously, by those worthy souls in whom consciousness of high descent brings burning desire to spread the gift abroad,—the obligation of nobility to the ignoble. Such sense of duty assumes two things: a real possession of the heritage and

its frank appreciation by the humble-born. So long, then, as humble black folk, voluble with thanks, receive barrels of old clothes from lordly and generous whites, there is much mental peace and moral satisfaction. But when the black man begins to dispute the white man's title to certain alleged bequests of the Fathers in wage and position, authority and training; and when his attitude toward charity is sullen anger rather than humble jollity; when he insists on his human right to swagger and swear and waste,—then the spell is suddenly broken and the philanthropist is ready to believe that Negroes are impudent, that the South is right, and that Japan wants to fight America.

After this the descent to Hell is easy. On the pale, white faces which the great billows whirl upward to my tower I see again and again, often and still more often, a writing of human hatred, a deep and passionate hatred, vast by the very vagueness of its expressions. Down through the green waters, on the bottom of the world, where men move to and fro, I have seen a man—an educated gentleman—grow livid with anger because a little, silent, black woman was sitting by herself in a Pullman car. He was a white man. I have seen a great, grown man curse a little child, who had wandered into the wrong waiting-room, searching for its mother: “Here, you damned black—” He was white. In Central Park I have seen the upper lip of a quiet, peaceful man curl back in a tigerish snarl of rage because black folk rode by in a motor car. He was a white man. We have seen, you and I, city after city drunk and furious with ungovernable lust of blood; mad with murder, destroying, killing, and cursing; torturing human victims because somebody accused of crime happened to be of the same

color as the mob's innocent victims and because that color was not white! We have seen,—Merciful God! in these wild days and in the name of Civilization, Justice, and Motherhood,—what have we not seen, right here in America, of orgy, cruelty, barbarism, and murder done to men and women of Negro descent.

Up through the foam of green and weltering waters wells this great mass of hatred, in wilder, fiercer violence, until I look down and know that today to the millions of my people no misfortune could happen,—of death and pestilence, failure and defeat—that would not make the hearts of millions of their fellows beat with fierce, vindictive joy! Do you doubt it? Ask your own soul what it would say if the next census were to report that half of black America was dead and the other half dying.

Unfortunate? Unfortunate. But where is the misfortune? Mine? Am I, in my blackness, the sole sufferer? I suffer. And yet, somehow, above the suffering, above the shackled anger that beats the bars, above the hurt that crazes there surges in me a vast pity,—pity for a people imprisoned and enthralled, hampered and made miserable for such a cause, for such a phantasy!

Conceive this nation, of all human peoples, engaged in a crusade to make the "World Safe for Democracy"! Can you imagine the United States protesting against Turkish atrocities in Armenia, while the Turks are silent about mobs in Chicago and St. Louis; what is Louvain compared with Memphis, Waco, Washington, Dyersburg, and Estill Springs? In short, what is the black man but

America's Belgium, and how could America condemn in Germany that which she commits, just as brutally, within her own borders?

A true and worthy ideal frees and uplifts a people; a false ideal imprisons and lowers. Say to men, earnestly and repeatedly: "Honesty is best, knowledge is power; do unto others as you would be done by." Say this and act it and the nation must move toward it, if not to it. But say to a people: "The one virtue is to be white," and the people rush to the inevitable conclusion, "Kill the 'nigger'!"

Are we not coming more and more, day by day, to making the statement "I am white," the one fundamental tenet of our practical morality?

Is not this the record of present America? Is not this its headlong progress? Are we not coming more and more, day by day, to making the statement "I am white," the one fundamental tenet of our practical morality? Only when this basic, iron rule is involved is our defense of right nation-wide and prompt. Murder may swagger, theft may rule and prostitution may flourish and the nation gives but spasmodic, intermittent and lukewarm attention. But let the murderer be black or the thief brown or the violator of womanhood have a drop of Negro blood, and the righteousness of the indignation sweeps the world. Nor would this fact make the

indignation less justifiable did not we all know that it was blackness that was condemned and not crime.

In the awful cataclysm of World War, where from beating, slandering, and murdering us the white world turned temporarily aside to kill each other, we of the Darker Peoples looked on in mild amaze.

Among some of us, I doubt not, this sudden descent of Europe into hell brought unbounded surprise; to others, over wide area, it brought the *Schaden Freude*¹ of the bitterly hurt; but most of us, I judge, looked on silently and sorrowfully, in sober thought, seeing sadly the prophecy of our own souls.

Here is a civilization that has boasted much. Neither Roman nor Arab, Greek nor Egyptian, Persian nor Mongol ever took himself and his own perfectness with such disconcerting seriousness as the modern white man. We whose shame, humiliation, and deep insult his aggrandizement so often involved were never deceived. We looked at him clearly, with world-old eyes, and saw simply a human thing, weak and pitiable and cruel, even as we are and were.

These super-men and world-mastering demi-gods listened, however, to no low tongues of ours, even when we pointed silently to their feet of clay. Perhaps we, as folk of simpler soul and more primitive type, have been most struck in the welter of recent years by the utter failure of white religion. We have curled our lips in something like contempt as we have witnessed glib apology and

weary explanation. Nothing of the sort deceived us. A nation's religion is its life, and as such white Christianity is a miserable failure.

Nor would we be unfair in this criticism: We know that we, too, have failed, as you have, and have rejected many a Buddha, even as you have denied Christ; but we acknowledge our human frailty, while you, claiming super-humanity, scoff endlessly at our shortcomings.

The number of white individuals who are practising with even reasonable approximation the democracy and unselfishness of Jesus Christ is so small and unimportant as to be fit subject for jest in Sunday supplements and in *Punch*, *Life*, *Le Rire*, and *Fliegende Blätter*. In her foreign mission work the extraordinary self-deception of white religion is epitomized: solemnly the white world sends five million dollars worth of missionary propaganda to Africa each year and in the same twelve months adds twenty-five million dollars worth of the vilest gin manufactured. Peace to the augurs of Rome!

We may, however, grant without argument that religious ideals have always far outrun their very human devotees. Let us, then, turn to more mundane matters of honor and fairness. The world today is trade. The world has turned shopkeeper; history is economic history; living is earning a living. Is it necessary to ask how much of high enterprise and honorable conduct has been found here? Something, to be sure. The establishment of world credit systems is built on splendid and realizable faith in fellow-men. But

it is, after all, so low and elementary a step that sometimes it looks merely like honor among thieves, for the revelations of highway robbery and low cheating in the business world and in all its great modern centers have raised in the hearts of all true men in our day an exceeding great cry for revolution in our basic methods and conceptions of industry and commerce.

We do not, for a moment, forget the robbery of other times and races when trade was a most uncertain gamble; but was there not a certain honesty and frankness in the evil that argued a saner morality? There are more merchants today, surer deliveries, and wider well-being, but are there not, also, bigger thieves, deeper injustice, and more calloused selfishness in well-being? Be that as it may,—certainly the nicer sense of honor that has risen ever and again in groups of forward-thinking men has been curiously and broadly blunted. Consider our chiefest industry,—fighting. Laboriously the Middle Ages built its rules of fairness—equal armament, equal notice, equal conditions. What do we see today? Machine-guns against assegais;² conquest sugared with religion; mutilation and rape masquerading as culture,—all this, with vast applause at the superiority of white over black soldiers!

War is horrible! This the dark world knows to its awful cost. But has it just become horrible, in these last days, when under essentially equal conditions, equal armament, and equal waste of wealth white men are fighting white men, with surgeons and nurses hovering near?

Think of the wars through which we have lived in the last decade: in German Africa, in British Nigeria, in French and Spanish Morocco, in China, in Persia, in the Balkans, in Tripoli, in Mexico, and in a dozen lesser places—were not these horrible, too? Mind you, there were for most of these wars no Red Cross funds.

Behold little Belgium and her pitiable plight, but has the world forgotten Congo? What Belgium now suffers is not half, not even a tenth, of what she has done to black Congo since Stanley's³ great dream of 1880. Down the dark forests of inmost Africa sailed this modern Sir Galahad, in the name of "the noble-minded men of several nations," to introduce commerce and civilization. What came of it? "Rubber and murder, slavery in its worst form," wrote Glave⁴ in 1895.

Harris⁵ declares that King Leopold's régime meant the death of twelve million natives, "but what we who were behind the scenes felt most keenly was the fact that the real catastrophe in the Congo was desolation and murder in the larger sense. The invasion of family life, the ruthless destruction of every social barrier, the shattering of every tribal law, the introduction of criminal practices which struck the chiefs of the people dumb with horror—in a word, a veritable avalanche of filth and immorality overwhelmed the Congo tribes."

Yet the fields of Belgium laughed, the cities were gay, art and science flourished; the groans that helped to nourish this civilization fell on deaf ears because the world round about was doing the same sort of thing elsewhere on its own account.

As we saw the dead dimly through rifts of battle-smoke and heard faintly the cursings and accusations of blood brothers, we darker men said: This is not Europe gone mad; this is not aberration nor insanity; this *is* Europe; this seeming Terrible is the real soul of white culture—back of all culture,—stripped and visible today. This is where the world has arrived,—these dark and awful depths and not the shining and ineffable heights of which it boasted. Here is whither the might and energy of modern humanity has really gone.

But may not the world cry back at us and ask: “What better thing have you to show? What have you done or would do better than this if you had today the world rule? Paint with all riot of hateful colors the thin skin of European culture,—is it not better than any culture that arose in Africa or Asia?”

It is. Of this there is no doubt and never has been; but why is it better? Is it better because Europeans are better, nobler, greater, and more gifted than other folk? It is not. Europe has never produced and never will in our day bring forth a single human soul who cannot be matched and over-matched in every line of human endeavor by Asia and Africa. Run the gamut, if you will, and let us have the Europeans who in sober truth over-match Nefertari, Mohammed, Rameses and Askia, Confucius, Buddha, and Jesus Christ. If we could scan the calendar of thousands of lesser men, in like comparison, the result would be the same; but we cannot do this because of the deliberately educated ignorance of white schools by which they remember Napoleon and forget Sonni Ali.⁶

The greatness of Europe has lain in the width of the stage on which she has played her part, the strength of the foundations on which she has builded, and a natural, human ability no whit greater (if as great) than that of other days and races. In other words, the deeper reasons for the triumph of European civilization lie quite outside and beyond Europe,—back in the universal struggles of all mankind.

Why, then, is Europe great? Because of the foundations which the mighty past have furnished her to build upon: the iron trade of ancient, black Africa, the religion and empire-building of yellow Asia, the art and science of the “dago” Mediterranean shore, east, south, and west, as well as north. And where she has builded securely upon this great past and learned from it she has gone forward to greater and more splendid human triumph; but where she has ignored this past and forgotten and sneered at it, she has shown the cloven hoof of poor, crucified humanity,—she has played, like other empires gone, the world fool!

If, then, European triumphs in culture have been greater, so, too, may her failures have been greater. How great a failure and a failure in what does the World War betoken? Was it national jealousy of the sort of the seventeenth century? But Europe has done more to break down national barriers than any preceding culture. Was it fear of the balance of power in Europe? Hardly, save in the half-Asiatic problems of the Balkans. What, then, does Hauptmann⁷ mean when he says: “Our jealous enemies forged an iron ring about our breasts and we knew our breasts had to expand,—that we had to split asunder this ring or else we had to

cease breathing. But Germany will not cease to breathe and so it came to pass that the iron ring was forced apart.”

Manifestly it is expansion overseas; it is colonial aggrandizement which explains, and alone adequately explains, the World War.

Whither is this expansion? What is that breath of life, thought to be so indispensable to a great European nation? Manifestly it is expansion overseas; it is colonial aggrandizement which explains, and alone adequately explains, the World War. How many of us today fully realize the current theory of colonial expansion, of the relation of Europe which is white, to the world which is black and brown and yellow? Bluntly put, that theory is this: It is the duty of white Europe to divide up the darker world and administer it for Europe's good.

This Europe has largely done. The European world is using black and brown men for all the uses which men know. Slowly but surely white culture is evolving the theory that “darkies” are born beasts of burden for white folk. It were silly to think otherwise, cries the cultured world, with stronger and shriller accord. The supporting arguments grow and twist themselves in the mouths of merchant, scientist, soldier, traveler, writer, and missionary: Darker peoples are dark in mind as well as in body; of dark, uncertain, and imperfect descent; of frailer, cheaper stuff; they are cowards in the

face of mausers and maxims; they have no feelings, aspirations, and loves; they are fools, illogical idiots,—“half-devil and half-child.”

Such as they are civilization must, naturally, raise them, but soberly and in limited ways. They are not simply dark white men. They are not “men” in the sense that Europeans are men. To the very limited extent of their shallow capacities lift them to be useful to whites, to raise cotton, gather rubber, fetch ivory, dig diamonds,—and let them be paid what men think they are worth—white men who know them to be well-nigh worthless.

Such degrading of men by men is as old as mankind and the invention of no one race or people. Ever have men striven to conceive of their victims as different from the victors, endlessly different, in soul and blood, strength and cunning, race and lineage. It has been left, however, to Europe and to modern days to discover the eternal world-wide mark of meanness,—color!

Such is the silent revolution that has gripped modern European culture in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its zenith came in Boxer times:⁸ White supremacy was all but world-wide, Africa was dead, India conquered, Japan isolated, and China prostrate, while white America whetted her sword for mongrel Mexico and mulatto South America, lynching her own Negroes the while. Temporary halt in this program was made by little Japan and the white world immediately sensed the peril of such “yellow” presumption! What sort of a world would this be if yellow men must be treated “white”? Immediately the eventual overthrow of

Japan became a subject of deep thought and intrigue, from St. Petersburg to San Francisco, from the Key of Heaven to the Little Brother of the Poor.

The using of men for the benefit of masters is no new invention of modern Europe. It is quite as old as the world. But Europe proposed to apply it on a scale and with an elaborateness of detail of which no former world ever dreamed. The imperial width of the thing,—the heaven-defying audacity—makes its modern newness.

The scheme of Europe was no sudden invention, but a way out of long-pressing difficulties. It is plain to modern white civilization that the subjection of the white working classes cannot much longer be maintained. Education, political power, and increased knowledge of the technique and meaning of the industrial process are destined to make a more and more equitable distribution of wealth in the near future. The day of the very rich is drawing to a close, so far as individual white nations are concerned. But there is a loophole. There is a chance for exploitation on an immense scale for inordinate profit, not simply to the very rich, but to the middle class and to the laborers. This chance lies in the exploitation of darker peoples. It is here that the golden hand beckons. Here are no labor unions or votes or questioning onlookers or inconvenient consciences. These men may be used down to the very bone, and shot and maimed in “punitive” expeditions when they revolt. In these dark lands “industrial development” may repeat in exaggerated form every horror of the industrial history of Europe, from slavery and rape to disease and maiming, with only one test of success,—dividends!

This theory of human culture and its aims has worked itself through warp and woof of our daily thought with a thoroughness that few realize. Everything great, good, efficient, fair, and honorable is “white”; everything mean, bad, blundering, cheating, and dishonorable is “yellow”; a bad taste is “brown”; and the devil is “black.” The changes of this theme are continually rung in picture and story, in newspaper heading and moving-picture, in sermon and school book, until, of course, the King can do no wrong,—a White Man is always right and a Black Man has no rights which a white man is bound to respect.

There must come the necessary despisings and hatreds of these savage half-men, this unclean *canaille*⁹ of the world—these dogs of men. All through the world this gospel is preaching. It has its literature, it has its priests, it has its secret propaganda and above all—it pays!

There’s the rub,—it pays. Rubber, ivory, and palm-oil; tea, coffee, and cocoa; bananas, oranges, and other fruit; cotton, gold, and copper—they, and a hundred other things which dark and sweating bodies hand up to the white world from their pits of slime, pay and pay well, but of all that the world gets the black world gets only the pittance that the white world throws it disdainfully.

Small wonder, then, that in the practical world of things-that-be there is jealousy and strife for the possession of the labor of dark millions, for the right to bleed and exploit the colonies of the world where this golden stream may be had, not always for the asking,

but surely for the whipping and shooting. It was this competition for the labor of yellow, brown, and black folks that was the cause of the World War. Other causes have been glibly given and other contributing causes there doubtless were, but they were subsidiary and subordinate to this vast quest of the dark world's wealth and toil.

Colonies, we call them, these places where “niggers” are cheap and the earth is rich; they are those outlands where like a swarm of hungry locusts white masters may settle to be served as kings, wield the lash of slave-drivers, rape girls and wives, grow as rich as Croesus¹⁰ and send homeward a golden stream. They belt the earth, these places, but they cluster in the tropics, with its darkened peoples: in Hong Kong and Anam, in Borneo and Rhodesia, in Sierra Leone and Nigeria, in Panama and Havana—these are the El Dorados toward which the world powers stretch itching palms.

Germany, at last one and united and secure on land, looked across the seas and seeing England with sources of wealth insuring a luxury and power which Germany could not hope to rival by the slower processes of exploiting her own peasants and workingmen, especially with these workers half in revolt, immediately built her navy and entered into a desperate competition for possession of colonies of darker peoples. To South America, to China, to Africa, to Asia Minor, she turned like a hound quivering on the leash, impatient, suspicious, irritable, with blood-shot eyes and dripping fangs, ready for the awful word. England and France crouched watchfully over their bones,

growling and wary, but gnawing industriously, while the blood of the dark world whetted their greedy appetites. In the background, shut out from the highway to the seven seas, sat Russia and Austria, snarling and snapping at each other and at the last Mediterranean gate to the El Dorado, where the Sick Man enjoyed bad health, and where millions of serfs in the Balkans, Russia, and Asia offered a feast to greed well-nigh as great as Africa.

The fateful day came. It had to come. The cause of war is preparation for war; and of all that Europe has done in a century there is nothing that has equaled in energy, thought, and time her preparation for wholesale murder. The only adequate cause of this preparation was conquest and conquest, not in Europe, but primarily among the darker peoples of Asia and Africa; conquest, not for assimilation and uplift, but for commerce and degradation. For this, and this mainly, did Europe gird herself at frightful cost for war.

The red day dawned when the tinder was lighted in the Balkans and Austro-Hungary seized a bit which brought her a step nearer to the world's highway; she seized one bit and poised herself for another. Then came that curious chorus of challenges, those leaping suspicions, raking all causes for distrust and rivalry and hatred, but saying little of the real and greatest cause.

Each nation felt its deep interests involved. But how? Not, surely, in the death of Ferdinand the Warlike;¹¹ not, surely, in the old, half-forgotten *revanche*¹² for Alsace-Lorraine; not even in the neutrality of Belgium. No! But in the possession of land overseas, in the

right to colonies, the chance to levy endless tribute on the darker world,—on coolies in China, on starving peasants in India, on black savages in Africa, on dying South Sea Islanders, on Indians of the Amazon—all this and nothing more.

Even the broken reed on which we had rested high hopes of eternal peace,—the guild of the laborers—the front of that very important movement for human justice on which we had builded most, even this flew like a straw before the breath of king and kaiser. Indeed, the flying had been foreshadowed when in Germany and America “international” Socialists had all but read yellow and black men out of the kingdom of industrial justice. Subtly had they been bribed, but effectively: Were they not lordly whites and should they not share in the spoils of rape? High wages in the United States and England might be the skilfully manipulated result of slavery in Africa and of peonage in Asia.

With the dog-in-the-manger theory of trade, with the determination to reap inordinate profits and to exploit the weakest to the utmost there came a new imperialism,—the rage for one’s own nation to own the earth or, at least, a large enough portion of it to insure as big profits as the next nation. Where sections could not be owned by one dominant nation there came a policy of “open door,” but the “door” was open to “white people only.” As to the darkest and weakest of peoples there was but one unanimity in Europe,—that which Herr Dernberg of the German Colonial Office called the agreement with England to maintain white “prestige” in Africa,—the doctrine of the divine right of white people to steal.

Thus the world market most wildly and desperately sought today is the market where labor is cheapest and most helpless and profit is most abundant. This labor is kept cheap and helpless because the white world despises "darkies." If one has the temerity to suggest that these workingmen may walk the way of white workingmen and climb by votes and self-assertion and education to the rank of men, he is howled out of court. They cannot do it and if they could, they shall not, for they are the enemies of the white race and the whites shall rule forever and forever and everywhere. Thus the hatred and despising of human beings from whom Europe wishes to extort her luxuries has led to such jealousy and bickering between European nations that they have fallen afoul of each other and have fought like crazed beasts. Such is the fruit of human hatred.

But what of the darker world that watches? Most men belong to this world. With Negro and Negroid, East Indian, Chinese, and Japanese they form two-thirds of the population of the world. A belief in humanity is a belief in colored men. If the uplift of mankind must be done by men, then the destinies of this world will rest ultimately in the hands of darker nations.

What, then, is this dark world thinking? It is thinking that as wild and awful as this shameful war was, *it is nothing to compare with that fight for freedom which black and brown and yellow men must and will make unless their oppression and humiliation and insult at the hands of the White World cease. The Dark World is going to submit to its present treatment just as long as it must and not one moment longer.*

Let me say this again and emphasize it and leave no room for mistaken meaning: The World War was primarily the jealous and avaricious struggle for the largest share in exploiting darker races. As such it is and must be but the prelude to the armed and indignant protest of these despised and raped peoples. Today Japan is hammering on the door of justice, China is raising her half-manacled hands to knock next, India is writhing for the freedom to knock, Egypt is sullenly muttering, the Negroes of South and West Africa, of the West Indies, and of the United States are just awakening to their shameful slavery. Is, then, this war the end of wars? Can it be the end, so long as sits enthroned, even in the souls of those who cry peace, the despising and robbing of darker peoples? If Europe hugs this delusion, then this is not the end of world war,—it is but the beginning!

We see Europe's greatest sin precisely where we found Africa's and Asia's,—in human hatred, the despising of men; with this difference, however: Europe has the awful lesson of the past before her, has the splendid results of widened areas of tolerance, sympathy, and love among men, and she faces a greater, an infinitely greater, world of men than any preceding civilization ever faced.

It is curious to see America, the United States, looking on herself, first, as a sort of natural peacemaker, then as a moral protagonist in this terrible time. No nation is less fitted for this rôle. For two or more centuries America has marched proudly in the van of human hatred,—making bonfires of human flesh and laughing at them hideously, and making the insulting of millions more than a matter

of dislike,—rather a great religion, a world war-cry: Up white, down black; to your tents, O white folk, and world war with black and particolored mongrel beasts!

Instead of standing as a great example of the success of democracy and the possibility of human brotherhood, America has taken her place as an awful example of its pitfalls and failures, so far as black and brown and yellow peoples are concerned. And this, too, in spite of the fact that there has been no actual failure; the Indian is not dying out, the Japanese and Chinese have not menaced the land, and the experiment of Negro suffrage has resulted in the uplift of twelve million people at a rate probably unparalleled in history. But what of this? America, Land of Democracy, wanted to believe in the failure of democracy so far as darker peoples were concerned. Absolutely without excuse she established a caste system, rushed into preparation for war, and conquered tropical colonies. She stands today shoulder to shoulder with Europe in Europe's worst sin against civilization. She aspires to sit among the great nations who arbitrate the fate of "lesser breeds without the law" and she is at times heartily ashamed even of the large number of "new" white people whom her democracy has admitted to place and power. Against this surging forward of Irish and German, of Russian Jew, Slav and "dago" her social bars have not availed, but against Negroes she can and does take her unflinching and immovable stand, backed by this new public policy of Europe. She trains her immigrants to this despising of "niggers" from the day of their landing, and they carry and send the news back to the submerged classes in the fatherlands.

All this I see and hear up in my tower, above the thunder of the seven seas. From my narrowed windows I stare into the night that looms beneath the cloud-swept stars. Eastward and westward storms are breaking,—great, ugly whirlwinds of hatred and blood and cruelty. I will not believe them inevitable. I will not believe that all that was must be, that all the shameful drama of the past must be done again today before the sunlight sweeps the silver seas.

If I cry amid this roar of elemental forces, must my cry be in vain, because it is but a cry,—a small and human cry amid Promethean gloom?

Back beyond the world and swept by these wild, white faces of the awful dead, why will this Soul of White Folk,—this modern Prometheus,—hang bound by his own binding, tethered by a fable of the past? I hear his mighty cry reverberating through the world, “I am white!” Well and good, O Prometheus, divine thief! Is not the world wide enough for two colors, for many little shillings of the sun? Why, then, devour your own vitals if I answer even as proudly, “I am black!”

Darkwater, 1920

 QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. How did the ancient Greeks and Romans treat skin color?
2. What is Du Bois’s position on white philanthropy?
3. Why does Du Bois feel white religion is a failure?
4. How well does democracy function in Du Bois’s America?

5. What is meant by saying “history is economic history”?
6. In what ways does Du Bois think capitalism creates racism?
7. What does Du Bois think caused World War I?

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. In [paragraph 46](#) Du Bois says that the competition for the labor “of dark millions” was the principle cause of World War I. Research the causes of that war and decide whether or not Du Bois is correct. He admits that there were other incidental causes, but that his cause was the primary cause.
2. Du Bois, writing after the economic devastation of World War I, saw that many European fortunes were depleted. He then declared that the day of the very rich is drawing to a close. What were the circumstances of the wealthy after that war? Why did Du Bois feel he could make this statement? What are the circumstances of the very rich today? What might Du Bois say about today’s very rich?
3. What are the primary ethical issues in this essay? Is racism an ethical issue? Is colonization an ethical issue? How would Du Bois answer these questions? What seems to have been the ethical circumstances in America and Europe in 1920? How different are they from now?
4. After researching the crimes against blacks in the United States in the years during and after World War I, compare the effects of racism on whites, blacks, and people of color today with what happened in those years. What grounds are there for optimism about American society today as opposed to American society in 1914–1920? Despite Du Bois’s anger expressed in this essay, do you think he ended the essay as an optimist or a pessimist? Why did he write the essay?
5. Du Bois makes a great many claims in this essay. He is declarative and confident in all that he says. However, you may feel that he distorts social circumstances and misunderstands some important points. Write an essay that takes issue with one key point and explain

why Du Bois should be corrected or why his views need clarification that might imply a different outcome. You may want to take issue with his views on religion, trade, war, or colonization.

6. One result of the end of World War II was Europe's loss of its colonies, particularly India, Egypt, Kenya and Uganda, Somaliland, Algeria, Sudan, Congo, South Africa, and many more such nations. Choose one or two and describe how they became independent and how they now function in world trade. What has been the legacy of colonization in these nations? To what extent have they continued to maintain contact with their colonizers? Is racism an issue in these former colonies?

CONNECTIONS

1. Frantz Fanon, in "[On Violence](#)", insists that the only way a colony can declare independence is through violence. Choose one of the African colonies and explain how valid Fanon's ideas are in the process of that colony's becoming independent. Would Du Bois accept Fanon's views? How might Du Bois qualify the ideas about decolonization that Fanon discusses?
2. Throughout his essay, Du Bois challenged the ethical standards he felt were being broken constantly by the actions of European racism. Examine Michael Gazzaniga's selection, "[Toward a Universal Ethics](#)", and write an essay that compares what Gazzaniga has to say about genetic and other influences on behavior with what Du Bois describes in his condemnation of colonization.



Mary Midgely *Trying Out One's Sword*



Gary Calton/eyevine/Redux

MARY MIDGELY (1919–2018) was born into a distinguished family. Her father, a curate, became chaplain of King's College, Cambridge. She went to Downe House School, where she was introduced to Greek by an adventurous teacher. When it came time for college she attended Somerville, the women's college at Oxford, where she chose a curriculum that included classics and

philosophy, permitting her to study Plato and other Greek philosophers. During the early days of World War II many of the male students went into the military, and Midgely notes that during this time women were given more attention and opportunity by professors, as well as by society more broadly. Among her classmates at Oxford were three other distinguished philosophers: Iris Murdoch, Elizabeth Anscombe, and Philippa Foot, whose work is also included in this anthology.

Midgely left Oxford in 1942 because of the pressures of war, worked in civil service for several years, and also taught at Downe School until she returned to Oxford in 1947 to begin work on a doctorate. For personal reasons, she decided ultimately not to continue and later said she was glad not to have taken the doctorate because she felt she had more intellectual space to follow her interests in philosophy. She met her husband Geoffrey, also a philosopher at Oxford, and together they went to Newcastle, where Geoffrey taught at Newcastle University. Later, Mary taught there from 1961 to 1980, after which she retired to write full time.

Her work as a professional philosopher began with an article that developed into her first book, *Beast and Man* (1978), which took issue with the work of Darwin and with others who argued against the existence of a human nature. In the writing of this book, she discovered an interest in ethology, the study of animal behavior, but with a particular concern for the implications of understanding human beings. She felt that Darwinists, particularly the social Darwinists of the nineteenth century, had emphasized the

competitiveness and the aggressiveness of the animal world over the social nature of humans. By studying animals, she felt she could support the idea of there being a human nature that was strongly marked by a communal sense, empathy, and affection. Above all, she felt that there was much to be learned from observing animals and that humans shared many psychological and social behaviors with the animal world due to evolution. She further pursued the ideas she began in this book, expanding her interest in ethology into a deep concern for ecology.

Later, she became a champion for Gaia in her book *Science and Poetry* (2001). Gaia refers to the classical deity, Mother Earth, and James Lovelock's book, *A New Look at Life on Earth* (1979), which proposes that all organisms and all elements on earth are part of a biosphere designed for life. In some interpretations Gaia is a life force, implying that the universe echoes forms that sustain life. Midgely's understanding is that the ideas of Gaia help to move us toward protecting the environment to keep the biosphere healthy. She helped found the Gaia Network, which is devoted to protecting the living system of the planet, a project she saw as both a scientific and a spiritual enterprise. For her Gaia revealed an ethical imperative to protect and save life.

Her many books prove her to be a vigorous philosopher whose work was aimed at informing the common reader. Because her years at Oxford left her with many friends in the sciences, she had always taken science seriously. Her books *Evolution as Religion* (1985) and *Science as Salvation* (1992) were to some extent critiques of what she felt were limited points of view. The first book

examined the work of evolutionary biologists and took issue with Richard Dawkins' theory of the "Selfish Gene," which implied that our genes, rather than our will or our rational mind, drive our behavior. The second book critiqued, among other things, artificial intelligence. In both instances, Midgely found herself in the middle of controversy and showed herself to be a powerful adversary.

Throughout her career she argued against any views that were reductionist, which is to say limited to a narrow window of interpretation. For example, her book *Are You an Illusion?* (2014) argues against Francis Crick, one of the discoverers of the helix shape of DNA, who in his book *The Astonishing Hypothesis* (1995) proposed the idea that our sense of identity is an illusion created by the nerve cells and molecules that compose our intellectual nervous system. She takes issue with this concept by pointing to the fact that this is only one way to look at the phenomenon of consciousness and awareness. She examines her own psychology and discusses her sense of self, reminding her reader that self-knowledge is central to understanding the world. Moreover, she argues that there is a distinction between what is created—the sense of self—and what creates it—our neurons. She sees our sense of self as real, just as she sees our ideas as real and our capacity to observe the world around us as real.

MIDGELY'S RHETORIC

This is a brief essay that carefully examines a concept Midgely calls "moral isolationism." What she means is that, if we cannot

make moral judgments about other cultures, we are isolationists who may have trouble making moral judgments about our own culture. Each paragraph is designed to propose a moral problem and then to go step by step through a reasoning process that explores the issues and alternative views before it leads us to make a conclusion about our own ability to critique other cultures.

Her opening paragraph establishes that our own culture is changing very rapidly. Our parents and grandparents might have trouble adjusting to our culture today. That alone implies the difficulties we may have in understanding cultures strange to us. If we cannot make judgments about other cultures, we are then morally isolated, and Midgely tells us that this does not make sense. She uses the rhetorical strategy of example in order to make the relatively abstract idea of moral isolationism more concrete. She offers us a moral issue. A new samurai sword, in order to be proved satisfactory, must be tried out on someone. There is a Japanese word for this, *tsujigiri*, which applies to a samurai warrior with a new sword finding a traveler at a crossroads and cutting him in half in one stroke, thus proving the sword is as good as it should be. If the warrior makes a mess of things by having a defective sword, he would dishonor himself, his ancestors, and the emperor. We are left to consider the way in which we might judge such a cultural practice.

Midgely's second example is of a member of an indigenous Brazilian tribe who spent two weeks in a hospital for an operation that saved his life, who then left after totally condemning Western civilization. Midgely calls it a "damning indictment" and asks

whether or not someone could, after being in a culture for only two weeks, make such a judgment. This leads her to consider the question of judging any culture that is not one's own. She makes things a bit more difficult by asking whether we can praise a culture without fully understanding it. And if we can praise a culture, can we not also critique it? She assumes that we would not be praising or critiquing the entire culture so much as we would be addressing only a single action, such as the validation of a samurai sword in Japan.

Midgely also uses rhetorical questions to considerable advantage, going so far as to enumerate them. She begins in [paragraph 5](#): "We must ask first: Does the isolating barrier work both ways?" which means that if we cannot critique other cultures, does that not mean that they cannot critique us? In [paragraph 7](#) she proceeds: "Our next question is this: Does the isolating barrier between cultures block praise as well as blame?" In [paragraph 8](#) she asks a very difficult question: "This brings us to our third question: What is involved in judging?" And her last question is: "If we can't judge other cultures, can we really judge our own?"

In the process of asking these questions, Midgely manages to clarify the unspoken complexities involved in making any moral critiques about another culture while at the same time showing how difficult it is to understand our own culture. She ends with an observation about the way in which any modern culture is composed of many streams of cultures mixing and affecting each other. She speaks of her own British culture, which was affected by the cultures of its colonies over a period of three hundred

years. The United States, because it is composed of waves of immigrants bringing their cultural assumptions with them, is perhaps even more of a mixture than Midgely's.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Mary Midgely's "Trying Out One's Sword." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What is moral isolationism?
2. What does it mean to judge a culture?
3. Why is moral judgment necessary?

Trying Out One's Sword

All of us are, more or less, in trouble today about trying to understand cultures strange to us. We hear constantly of alien customs. We see changes in our lifetime which would have astonished our parents. I want to discuss here one very short way of dealing with this difficulty, a drastic way which many people now theoretically favor. It consists in simply denying that we can ever understand any culture except our own well enough to make judgments about it. Those who recommend this hold that the world is sharply divided into separate societies, sealed units, each with its own system of thought. They feel that the respect and tolerance due from one system to another forbids us ever to take up a critical position to any other culture. Moral judgment, they suggest, is a kind of coinage valid only in its country of origin.

I shall call this position "moral isolationism." I shall suggest that it is certainly not forced upon us, and indeed that it makes no sense at all. People usually take it up because they think it is a respectful attitude to other cultures. In fact, however, it is not respectful. Nobody can respect what is entirely unintelligible to them. To respect someone, we have to know enough about him to make a *favorable* judgment, however general and tentative. And we do understand people in other cultures to this extent. Otherwise a great mass of our most valuable thinking would be paralyzed.

To show this, I shall take a remote example, because we shall probably find it easier to think calmly about it than we should with

a contemporary one, such as female circumcision in Africa or the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The principles involved will still be the same. My example is this. There is, it seems, a verb in classical Japanese which means “to try out one’s new sword on a chance wayfarer.” (The word is *tsujigiri*, literally “crossroads-cut.”) A samurai sword had to be tried out because, if it was to work properly, it had to slice through someone at a single blow, from the shoulder to the opposite flank. Otherwise, the warrior bungled his stroke. This could injure his honor, offend his ancestors, and even let down his emperor. So tests were needed, and wayfarers had to be expended. Any wayfarer would do—provided, of course, that he was not another Samurai. Scientists will recognize a familiar problem about the rights of experimental subjects.

Now when we hear of a custom like this, we may well reflect that we simply do not understand it; and therefore are not qualified to criticize it at all, because we are not members of that culture. But we are not members of any other culture either, except our own. So we extend the principle to cover all extraneous cultures, and we seem therefore to be moral isolationists. But this is, as we shall see, an impossible position. Let us ask what it would involve.

We must ask first: Does the isolating barrier work both ways? Are people in other cultures equally unable to criticize *us*? This question struck me sharply when I read a remark in *The Guardian* by an anthropologist about a South American Indian who had been taken into a Brazilian town for an operation, which saved his life. When he came back to his village, he made several highly critical remarks about the white Brazilians’ way of life. They may

very well have been justified. But the interesting point was that the anthropologist called these remarks “a damning indictment of Western civilization.” Now the Indian had been in that town about two weeks. Was he in a position to deliver a damning indictment? Would we ourselves be qualified to deliver such an indictment on the Samurai, provided we could spend two weeks in ancient Japan? What do we really think about this?

My own impression is that we believe that outsiders can, in principle, deliver perfectly good indictments—only, it usually takes more than two weeks to make them damning. Understanding has degrees. It is not a slapdash yes-or-no matter. Intelligent outsiders can progress in it, and in some ways will be at an advantage over the locals. But if this is so, it must clearly apply to ourselves as much as anybody else.

Our next question is this: Does the isolating barrier between cultures block praise as well as blame? If I want to say that the Samurai culture has many virtues, or to praise the South American Indians, am I prevented from doing *that* by my outside status? Now, we certainly do need to praise other societies in this way. But it is hardly possible that we could praise them effectively if we could not, in principle, criticize them. Our praise would be worthless if it rested on definite grounds, if it did not flow from some understanding. Certainly we may need to praise things which we do not *fully* understand. We say “there’s something very good here, but I can’t quite make out what it is yet.” This happens when we want to learn from strangers. And we can learn from strangers. But to do this we have to distinguish between those

strangers who are worth learning from and those who are not.
Can we then judge which is which?

If we can't judge other cultures, can we really judge our own?

This brings us to our third question: What is involved in judging? Now plainly there is no question here of sitting on a bench in a red robe and sentencing people. Judging simply means forming an opinion, and expressing it if it is called for. Is there anything wrong about this? Naturally, we ought to avoid forming—and expressing—*crude* opinions, like that of a simple-minded missionary, who might dismiss the whole Samurai culture as entirely bad, because non-Christian. But this is a different objection. The trouble with crude opinions is that they are crude, whoever forms them, not that they are formed by the wrong people. Anthropologists, after all, are outsiders quite as much as missionaries. Moral isolationism forbids us to form *any* opinions on these matters. Its ground for doing so is that we don't understand them. But there is much that we don't understand in our own culture too. This brings us to our last question: If we can't judge other cultures, can we really judge our own? Our efforts to do so will be much damaged if we are really deprived of our opinions about other societies, because these provide the range of comparison, the spectrum of alternatives against which we set what we want to understand. We would have to stop using the mirror which anthropology so helpfully holds up to us.

In short, moral isolationism would lay down a general ban on moral reasoning. Essentially, this is the program of immoralism, and it carries a distressing logical difficulty. Immoralists like Nietzsche¹ are actually just a rather specialized sect of moralists. They can no more afford to put moralizing out of business than smugglers can afford to abolish customs regulations. The power of moral judgment is, in fact, not a luxury, not a perverse indulgence of the self-righteous. It is a necessity. When we judge something to be bad or good, better or worse than something else, we are taking it as an example to aim at or avoid. Without opinions of this sort, we would have no framework of comparison for our own policy, no chance of profiting by other people's insights or mistakes. In this vacuum, we could form no judgments on our own actions.

Now it would be odd if Homo sapiens had really got himself into a position as bad as this—a position where his main evolutionary asset, his brain, was so little use to him. None of us is going to accept this skeptical diagnosis. We cannot do so, because our involvement in moral isolationism does not flow from apathy, but from a rather acute concern about human hypocrisy and other forms of wickedness. But we polarize that concern around a few selected moral truths. We are rightly angry with those who despise, oppress or steamroll other cultures. We think that doing these things is actually *wrong*. But this is itself a moral judgment. We could not condemn oppression and insolence if we thought that all our condemnations were just a trivial local quirk of our own culture. We could still less do it if we tried to stop judging altogether.

Real moral scepticism, in fact, could lead only to inaction, to our losing all interest in moral questions, most of all in those which concern other societies. When we discuss these things, it becomes instantly clear how far we are from doing this. Suppose, for instance, that I criticize the bisecting Samurai, that I say his behavior is brutal. What will usually happen next is that someone will protest, will say that I have no right to make criticisms like that of another culture. But it is more unlikely that he will use this move to end the discussion of the subject. Instead, he will justify the Samurai. He will try to fill in the background, to make me understand the custom, by explaining the exalted ideals of discipline and devotion which produced it. He will probably talk of the lower value which the ancient Japanese placed on individual life generally. He may well suggest that this is a healthier attitude than our own obsession with security. He may add, too, that the wayfarers did not seriously mind being bisected, that in principle they accepted the whole arrangement.

Now an objector who talks like this is implying that it *is* possible to understand alien customs. That is just what he is trying to make me do. And he implies, too, that if I do succeed in understanding them, I shall do something better than giving up judging them. He expects me to change my present judgment to a truer one—namely, one that is favorable. And the standards I must use to do this cannot just be Samurai standards. They have to be ones current in my own culture. Ideals like discipline and devotion will not move anybody unless he himself accepts them. As it happens, neither discipline nor devotion is very popular in the West at present. Anyone who appeals to them may well have to do some

more arguing to make *them* acceptable, before he can use them to explain the Samurai. But if he does succeed here, he will have persuaded us, not just that there was something to be said for them in ancient Japan, but that there would be here as well.

Isolating barriers simply cannot arise here. If we accept something as a serious moral truth about one culture, we can't refuse to apply it—in however different an outward form—to other cultures as well, wherever circumstances admit it. If we refuse to do this, we just are not taking the other culture seriously. This becomes clear if we look at the last argument used by my objector—that of justification by consent of the victim. It is suggested that sudden bisection is quite in order, *provided* that it takes place between consenting adults. I cannot now discuss how conclusive this justification is. What I am pointing out is simply that it can only work if we believe that *consent* can make such a transaction respectable—and this is a thoroughly modern and Western idea. It would probably never occur to a Samurai; if it did, it would surprise him very much. It is *our* standard. In applying it, too, we are likely to make another typically Western demand. We shall ask for good factual evidence that the wayfarers actually do have this rather surprising taste—that they are really willing to be bisected. In applying Western standards in this way, we are not being confused or irrelevant. We are asking the questions which arise *from where we stand*, questions which we can see the sense of. We do this because asking questions which you can't see the sense of is humbug. Certainly we can extend our questioning by imaginative effort. We can come to understand other societies better. By doing so, we may make their questions our own, or we

may see that they are really forms of the questions which we are asking already. This is not impossible. It is just very hard work. The obstacles which often prevent it are simply those of ordinary ignorance, laziness and prejudice.

If there were really an isolating barrier, of course, our own culture could never have been formed. It is no sealed box, but a fertile jungle of different influences—Greek, Jewish, Roman, Norse, Celtic and so forth, into which further influences are still pouring—American, Indian, Japanese, Jamaican, you name it. The moral isolationist's picture of separate, unmixable cultures is quite unreal. People who talk about British history usually stress the value of this fertilizing mix, no doubt rightly. But this is not just an odd fact about Britain. Except for the very smallest and most remote, all cultures are formed out of many streams. All have the problem of digesting and assimilating things which, at the start, they do not understand. All have the choice of learning something from this challenge, or, alternatively, of refusing to learn, and fighting it mindlessly instead.

This universal predicament has been obscured by the fact that anthropologists used to concentrate largely on very small and remote cultures, which did not seem to have this problem. These tiny societies, which had often forgotten their own history, made neat, self-contained subjects for study. No doubt it was valuable to emphasize their remoteness, their extreme strangeness, their independence of our cultural tradition. This emphasis was, I think, the root of moral isolationism. But, as the tribal studies themselves showed, even there the anthropologists were able to interpret

what they saw and make judgments—often favorable—about the tribesmen. And the tribesmen, too, were quite equal to making judgments about the anthropologists—and about the tourists and Coca-Cola salesmen who followed them. Both sets of judgments, no doubt, were somewhat hasty, both have been refined in the light of further experience. A similar transaction between us and the Samurai might take even longer. But that is no reason at all for deeming it impossible. Morally as well as physically, there is only one world, and we all have to live in it.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. Why is moral isolationism a problem?
2. What does it mean to judge a culture?
3. Why is judgment important?
4. Why must a samurai sword be tried out?
5. How can one critique one's own culture?
6. If you can praise a different culture, can you then critique it?
7. Is it possible to understand an alien culture?

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Midgely talks about serious moral truths in a culture. What, for you, are the most important serious moral truths in your culture? In identifying them, give examples that will make them more concrete to readers. If these are true for your culture, how can you defend them as important and true in other cultures?
2. What practice in a culture different from your own is most unacceptable to you? Why is it a moral issue, and how does that

culture regard that practice? Why is it acceptable in that culture but not in your culture? Does your rejection of that practice also imply a rejection of that entire culture?

3. Consider all the comments Midgely makes about the Japanese practice of *tsujigiri*, the testing of a samurai sword on an unsuspecting traveler at a crossroads. On what basis can you praise this cultural practice? On what basis can you condemn it? Do you need to be Japanese to make any judgment at all about this practice? Do you need to have spent a month or two in Japan to understand it? What kind of moral judgment can you make about this practice? Why do you think Midgely chose this example?
4. One of the most controversial of cultural practices is female circumcision in some African societies. Arguments are made on both sides, both from within and outside the societies in question. Research this practice and find arguments for both sides; then, avoiding moral isolationism, take a stand and produce the strongest moral argument you can. If possible, use Midgely's technique of building your argument through rhetorical questions. Is it possible that you can approve this practice when it is done in Africa, but not when it is done in the United States?
5. When Midgely talks about her cultural values, she is essentially talking about the cultural values of the West, transmitted as she says by the Greeks, Romans, and so forth. What are the most influential origins of Western culture? What are the most important cultural values that help define Western culture? Midgely implies that it is possible to critique one's own culture, so how would you critique it? What are its strengths, and what are its weaknesses?
6. Identify a culture with very different cultural practices from your own. What are some of the cultural practices of this other culture that you find uncomfortable? What practices that differ from your own culture do you find attractive? What cultural practices do you think are most difficult for you to understand? Do you think you must understand them, and if so, how?

■ ■ CONNECTIONS

1. Examine Francis Bacon's essay, "[The Four Idols](#)", and apply its four idols both to Midgely's essay and to the question of how or why one may critique an alien culture. What does Midgely have in common with Bacon's method of thinking about a complex problem? Midgely knows Bacon's essay well—has she used any of his techniques of reasoning? What makes you think she agrees with his basic principles?
2. In his essay "[The Souls of White Folk](#)", W. E. B. Du Bois has written a very comprehensive critique of a culture. Has he abided by any of the cautions that Midgely makes about the ability of someone to critique a culture? Du Bois critiques what is essentially the very culture that raised him and that he has belonged to most of his life. Yet he treats that culture as if it were alien. Why does his having a foot in both the white and the black cultures validate his ability to conduct his critique? How clearly does he avoid moral isolationism in his essay? What might Midgely have said to him about his approach to criticizing white culture in 1920?



Philippa Foot *Virtues and Vices*



Steve Pyke/Premium Archive/Getty Images

PHILIPPA FOOT (1920–2010) was born into a family in England that felt college was inappropriate for women. Consequently, she was educated so poorly by governesses at home that she has said she did not learn whether the Romans or the Greeks came first. Nonetheless, later she received enough coaching that she was admitted to Somerville College, Oxford. She was fortunate to

have been in classes with three other distinguished philosophers, Iris Murdoch, Elizabeth Anscombe, and Mary Midgely, who is also included in this anthology.

In 1942, during World War II, Foot left Oxford to work for the government in a department of economics. After the war she married and returned to Somerville, where she began teaching in 1949. She stayed in Somerville, writing and teaching, until 1960, when she resigned her position and went to the United States, teaching at a number of universities: the University of California at Los Angeles and Berkeley, the University of Washington, Princeton, Stanford, and the City University of New York. She settled at UCLA in 1976 and taught there until she retired in 1991 and returned to England.

For most of her work in philosophy, Foot has been known for her concern for virtue theorizing, engaging with Aristotle ("[The Aim of Man](#)"), whose work has served as her starting point. Foot sees three qualities of a virtue: first, it is an action that is willed by someone; second, it must benefit that person and other people; third, it corrects behaviors that tend to be detrimental to that person and to others. For her the primary virtues are courage, temperance, justice, charity, and wisdom. She has argued that one should possess these virtues because they produce good ends for the individual and the society. In her works she has examined these virtues in considerable detail, such as questioning the description of an individual as courageous because of the example of a courageous act. Foot has questioned that description in some cases, explaining that what seemed

courageous may simply have been fearlessness. She sees courage as not being limited to acts.

Interestingly, Foot is known for comparing morality to etiquette because each represents actions that one ought to do. Some philosophers took issue with this observation, but she contended that one always has a choice of whether to do as one should do in terms of etiquette, just as one has a choice of what to do in a moral situation. One can choose to shun someone or greet them; one can choose to be charitable toward a needy person or not. Foot makes the argument that human disposition is toward choosing good, despite the fact that for some people the choice is one of the seven vices, which in the long run do damage and harm to the individual and society.

Foot proposed a famous moral problem that a number of ethicists also view as revealing the complexity of ethics in a modern world. This problem, known as “The Trolley Problem,” presents the individual with a conundrum. Imagine a runaway trolley heading toward a track on which five people will be killed unless you, standing on the side, flip a switch to an alternate track on which the trolley will definitely hit and kill one person. Which choice do you feel is most moral? The utilitarian view (which values the greatest good for the greatest number) says flip the switch, but Foot is not so sure. She points to the fact that by flipping the switch you participate in the killing of one man. Doing nothing may be a rational choice. This problem has been argued in many variations, but whatever the conclusion, the point is that moral choices involve an act of will, and many are not entirely clearcut.

Another way of dealing with such a problem is called the Rescue Scenario. In Rescue I, we are driving along the beach and see a man in danger of the tide whom we can save, and we also see five men further along whom we can save, but we cannot save both. In Rescue II we see five men whom we can rescue, but to get to them, we need to run over a man and kill him. What are the choices? Foot argues that in Rescue I because we did not initiate the tidal action that will kill the single man it is morally permissible to go save the five men. But in Rescue II she sees that there is no justification for running over a person in order to save others. Again, people have argued this case, but both cases are designed to help us explore the complexities of moral behavior in our society.

FOOT'S RHETORIC

“Virtues and Vices” is a philosophical examination of virtues as defined by both Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. The first problem Foot addresses is that the terms each of those philosophers use to describe virtues need to be qualified for our modern age. Because he is a Christian theologian, Aquinas focuses on the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Today we also see, as Foot tells us, the four cardinal moral virtues: courage, temperance, wisdom, and justice. Foot’s view is that these virtues exist because there are temptations in life to be cowardly, intemperate, worldly, and unjust. These are vices that the wise person will see as harmful to oneself as well as to society.

The primary vices she identifies are pride, vanity, worldliness, and avarice. All of these are damaging to the person and to society because they imply a failure to respect the values that are most beneficial to society. The virtues are important to humanity because they are beneficial. Pride, for example, does not help those who have to deal with it, just as intemperance—behaving as if one’s own pleasures were the only important thing in the world—benefits no one, despite the intemperate individual’s sense that drunkenness and addiction produce a good time. The vices, Foot says ([para. 5](#)), are moral failings.

Throughout the essay, Foot offers thorough definitions. She defines virtues and vices, explaining their relation to an individual’s will to do the right thing. She agrees with Aristotle in concluding that the aim of man is happiness, but argues that happiness is achieved by choosing the good over the bad in life. When she comes to defining wisdom we see the complexities that force us to separate wisdom from cleverness ([para. 14](#)). Cleverness can be applied to any situation, good or bad. But wisdom “is related only to good ends.” She goes on to talk about wisdom as knowing what is beneficial to oneself as well as to others. Living a life devoted to false values would be avoided by a wise person. But she also goes on to describe wisdom as knowledge (knowing the right thing to do), but not just knowing what to do: it also involves preparing oneself to do the right thing. For example, knowing CPR may be essential in some situations. The wise person will have learned CPR so as not to fail when the opportunity arises.

Foot indicates that there are other beneficial qualities apart from the virtues she examines. Health, physical strength, memory, and concentration are all important qualities for the individual, but they are not entirely a product of a person's will. One does not will good health or a good memory. They are qualities independent of one's desires. Virtues are connected with the will: one's temperate behavior is a product of willing that behavior.

In [paragraph 21](#) Foot says, quoting Aristotle, “virtues are about what is difficult.” She agrees with Aquinas that courage and temperance are different from justice because the former involve passion or emotion, while justice is a right—that is to say, justice is what one expects to receive oneself. The essay attempts throughout to make distinctions as detailed as this in order to understand what virtues are and how they function in our society.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Philippa Foot's "[Virtues and Vices](#)." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What are the cardinal virtues?
2. What vices does Foot identify?
3. Why must a virtue engage the will?

Virtues and Vices

For many years the subject of the virtues and vices was strangely neglected by moralists working within the school of analytic philosophy.¹ The tacitly accepted opinion was that a study of the topic would form no part of the fundamental work of ethics; and since this opinion was apparently shared by philosophers such as Hume, Kant, Mill, G. E. Moore, W. D. Ross, and H. A. Prichard,² from whom contemporary moral philosophy has mostly been derived, perhaps the neglect was not so surprising after all. However that may be, things have recently been changing. During the past ten or fifteen years several philosophers have turned their attention to the subject; notably H. W. von Wright and Peter Geach.³ Von Wright devoted a not at all perfunctory chapter to the virtues in his book *The Varieties of Goodness*⁴ published in 1963, and Peter Geach's book called *The Virtues*⁵ appeared in 1977. Meanwhile a number of interesting articles on the topic have come out in the journals.

In spite of this recent work, it is best when considering the virtues and vices to go back to Aristotle and Aquinas.⁶ I myself have found Plato less helpful, because the individual virtues and vices are not so clearly or consistently distinguished in his work. It is certain, in any case, that the most systematic account is found in Aristotle, and in the blending of Aristotelian and Christian philosophy found in St. Thomas. By and large Aquinas followed Aristotle—sometimes even heroically—where Aristotle gave an opinion, and where St. Thomas is on his own, as in developing the

doctrine of the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, and in his theocentric doctrine of happiness, he still uses an Aristotelian framework where he can: as for instance in speaking of happiness as man's last end. However, there are different emphases and new elements in Aquinas's ethics: often he works things out in far more detail than Aristotle did, and it is possible to learn a great deal from Aquinas that one could not have got from Aristotle. It is my opinion that the *Summa Theologica* is one of the best sources we have for moral philosophy, and moreover that St. Thomas's ethical writings are as useful to the atheist as to the Catholic or other Christian believer.

There is, however, one minor obstacle to be overcome when one goes back to Aristotle and Aquinas for help in constructing a theory of virtues, namely a lack of coincidence between their terminology and our own. For when we talk about the virtues we are not taking as our subject everything to which Aristotle gave the name *arete*- or Aquinas *virtus*, and consequently not everything called a virtue in translations of these authors. 'The virtues' to us are the moral virtues whereas *arete*- and *virtus* refer also to arts, and even to excellences of the speculative intellect whose domain is theory rather than practice. And to make things more confusing we find some dispositions called moral virtues in translations from the Greek and Latin, although the class of virtues that Aristotle calls *aretai e-thikai* and Aquinas *virtutes morales* does not exactly correspond with our class of moral virtues. For us there are four cardinal moral virtues: courage, temperance, wisdom and justice. But Aristotle and Aquinas call only three of these virtues moral virtues; practical wisdom

(Aristotle's *phronēsis* and Aquinas's *prudentia*) they class with the intellectual virtues, though they point out the close connexions between practical wisdom and what they call moral virtues; and sometimes they even use *arete*-and *virtus* very much as we use 'virtue'.

I will come back to Aristotle and Aquinas, and shall indeed refer to them frequently in this paper. But I want to start by making some remarks, admittedly fragmentary, about the concept of a moral virtue as we understand the idea.

First of all it seems clear that virtues are, in some general way, beneficial. Human beings do not get on well without them. Nobody can get on well if he lacks courage, and does not have some measure of temperance and wisdom, while communities where justice and charity are lacking are apt to be wretched places to live, as Russia was under the Stalinist terror, or Sicily under the Mafia. But now we must ask to whom the benefit goes, whether to the man who has the virtue or rather to those who have to do with him? In the case of some of the virtues the answer seems clear. Courage, temperance and wisdom benefit both the man who has these dispositions and other people as well; and moral failings such as pride, vanity, worldliness, and avarice harm both their possessor and others, though chiefly perhaps the former. But what about the virtues of charity and justice? These are directly concerned with the welfare of others, and with what is owed to them; and since each may require sacrifice of interest on the part of the virtuous man both may seem to be deleterious to their possessor and beneficial to others. Whether in fact it is so has, of

course, been a matter of controversy since Plato's time or earlier. It is a reasonable opinion that on the whole a man is better off for being charitable and just, but this is not to say that circumstances may not arise in which he will have to sacrifice everything for charity or justice.

Nor is this the only problem about the relation between virtue and human good. For one very difficult question concerns the relation between justice and the common good. Justice, in the wide sense in which it is understood in discussions of the cardinal virtues, and in this paper, has to do with that to which someone has a right—that which he is owed in respect of non-interference and positive service—and rights may stand in the way of the pursuit of the common good. Or so at least it seems to those who reject utilitarian doctrines. This dispute cannot be settled here, but I shall treat justice as a virtue independent of charity, and standing as a possible limit on the scope of that virtue.

Let us say then, leaving unsolved problems behind us, that virtues are in general beneficial characteristics, and indeed ones that a human being needs to have, for his own sake and that of his fellows. This will not, however, take us far towards a definition of a virtue, since there are many other qualities of a man that may be similarly beneficial, as for instance bodily characteristics such as health and physical strength, and mental powers such as those of memory and concentration. What is it, we must ask, that differentiates virtues from such things?

while health and strength are excellences of the body, and memory and concentration of the mind, it is the will that is good in a man of virtue.

As a first approximation to an answer we might say that while health and strength are excellences of the body, and memory and concentration of the mind, it is the will that is good in a man of virtue. But this suggestion is worth only as much as the explanation that follows it. What might we mean by saying that virtue belongs to the will?

In the first place we observe that it is primarily by his intentions that a man's moral dispositions are judged. If he does something unintentionally this is usually irrelevant to our estimate of his virtue. But of course this thesis must be qualified, because failures in performance rather than intention may show a lack of virtue. This will be so when, for instance, one man brings harm to another without realising he is doing it, but where his ignorance is itself culpable. Sometimes in such cases there will be a previous act or omission to which we can point as the source of the ignorance. Charity requires that we take care to find out how to render assistance where we are likely to be called on to do so, and thus, for example, it is contrary to charity to fail to find out about elementary first aid. But in an interesting class of cases in which it seems again to be performance rather than intention that

counts in judging a man's virtue, there is no possibility of shifting the judgement to previous intentions. For sometimes one man succeeds where another fails not because there is some specific difference in their previous conduct but rather because his heart lies in a different place; and the disposition of the heart is part of virtue.

Thus it seems right to attribute a kind of moral failing to some deeply discouraging and debilitating people who say, without lying, that they mean to be helpful; and on the other side to see virtue *par excellence* in one who is prompt and resourceful in doing good. In his novel *A Single Pebble*, John Hersey⁷ describes such a man, speaking of a rescue in a swift flowing river

It was the head tracker's marvellous swift response that captured my admiration at first, his split second solicitousness when he heard a cry of pain, his finding in mid-air, as it were, the only way to save the injured boy. But there was more to it than that. His action, which could not have been mulled over in his mind, showed a deep, instinctive love of life, a compassion, an optimism, which made me feel very good ...

What this suggests is that a man's virtue may be judged by his innermost desires as well as by his intentions; and this fits with our idea that a virtue such as generosity lies as much in someone's attitudes as in his actions. Pleasure in the good fortune of others is, one thinks, the sign of a generous spirit; and small reactions of pleasure and displeasure often the surest signs of a man's moral disposition.

None of this shows that it is wrong to think of virtues as belonging to the will; what it does show is that 'will' must here be understood in its widest sense, to cover what is wished for as well as what is sought.

A different set of considerations will, however, force us to give up any simple statement about the relation between virtue and will, and these considerations have to do with the virtue of wisdom. Practical wisdom, we said, was counted by Aristotle among the intellectual virtues, and while our *wisdom* is not quite the same as *phronesis* or *prudentia*, it too might seem to belong to the intellect rather than the will. Is not wisdom a matter of knowledge, and how can knowledge be a matter of intention or desire? The answer is that it isn't, so that there is good reason for thinking of wisdom as an intellectual virtue. But on the other hand wisdom has special connexions with the will, meeting it at more than one point.

In order to get this rather complex picture in focus we must pause for a little and ask what it is that we ourselves understand by wisdom: what the wise man knows and what he does. Wisdom, as I see it, has two parts. In the first place the wise man knows the means to certain good ends; and secondly he knows how much particular ends are worth. Wisdom in its first part is relatively easy to understand. It seems that there are some ends belonging to human life in general rather than to particular skills such as medicine or boatbuilding, ends having to do with such matters as friendship, marriage, the bringing up of children, or the choice of ways of life; and it seems that knowledge of how to act well in these matters belongs to some people but not to others. We call

those who have this knowledge wise, while those who do not have it are seen as lacking wisdom. So, as both Aristotle and Aquinas insisted, wisdom is to be contrasted with cleverness because cleverness is the ability to take the right steps to any end, whereas wisdom is related only to good ends, and to human life in general rather than to the ends of particular arts.

Moreover, we should add, there belongs to wisdom only that part of knowledge which is within the reach of any ordinary adult human being: knowledge that can be acquired only by someone who is clever or who has access to special training is not counted as part of wisdom, and would not be so counted even if it could serve the ends that wisdom serves. It is therefore quite wrong to suggest that wisdom cannot be a moral virtue because virtue must be within the reach of anyone who really wants it and some people are too stupid to be anything but ignorant even about the most fundamental matters of human life. Some people are wise without being at all clever or well informed: they make good decisions and they know, as we say, 'what's what'.

In short wisdom, in what we called its first part, is connected with the will in the following ways. To begin with it presupposes good ends: the man who is wise does not merely know *how* to do good things such as looking after his children well, or strengthening someone in trouble, but must also want to do them. And then wisdom, in so far as it consists of knowledge which anyone can gain in the course of an ordinary life, is available to anyone who really wants it. As Aquinas put it, it belongs 'to a power under the direction of the will'.⁸

The second part of wisdom, which has to do with values, is much harder to describe, because here we meet ideas which are curiously elusive, such as the thought that some pursuits are more worthwhile than others, and some matters trivial and some important in human life. Since it makes good sense to say that most men waste a lot of their lives in ardent pursuit of what is trivial and unimportant, it is not possible to explain the important and the trivial in terms of the amount of attention given to different subjects by the average man. But I have never seen, or been able to think out, a true account of this matter, and I believe that a complete account of wisdom, and of certain other virtues and vices must wait until this gap can be filled. What we can see is that one of the things a wise man knows and a foolish man does not is that such things as social position, and wealth, and the good opinion of the world, are too dearly bought at the cost of health or friendship or family ties. So we may say that a man who lacks wisdom 'has false values', and that vices such as vanity and worldliness and avarice are contrary to wisdom in a special way. There is always an element of false judgement about these vices, since the man who is vain for instance sees admiration as more important than it is, while the worldly man is apt to see the good life as one of wealth and power. Adapting Aristotle's distinction between the weak-willed man (the akrates) who follows pleasure though he knows, in some sense, that he should not, and the licentious man (the akolastos) who sees the life of pleasure as the good life,⁹ we may say that moral failings such as these are never purely 'akratic'. It is true that a man may criticise himself for his worldliness or vanity or love of money, but then it is his values that are the subject of his criticism.

Wisdom in this second part is, therefore, partly to be described in terms of apprehension, and even judgement, but since it has to do with a man's attachments it also characterises his will.

The idea that virtues belong to the will, and that this helps to distinguish them from such things as bodily strength or intellectual ability has, then, survived the consideration of the virtue of wisdom, albeit in a fairly complex and slightly attenuated form. And we shall find this idea useful again if we turn to another important distinction that must be made, namely that between virtues and other practical excellences such as arts and skills.

Aristotle has sometimes been accused, for instance by von Wright, of failing to see how different virtues are from arts or skills;¹⁰ but in fact one finds, among the many things that Aristotle and Aquinas say about this difference, the observation that seems to go to the heart of the matter. In the matter of arts and skills, they say, voluntary error is preferable to involuntary error, while in the matter of virtues (what we call virtues) it is the reverse.¹¹ The last part of the thesis is actually rather hard to interpret, because it is not clear what is meant by the idea of involuntary viciousness. But we can leave this aside and still have all we need in order to distinguish arts or skills from virtues. If we think, for instance, of someone who deliberately makes a spelling mistake (perhaps when writing on the blackboard in order to explain this particular point) we see that this does not in any way count against his skill as a speller: 'I did it deliberately' rebuts an accusation of this kind. And what we can say without running into any difficulties is that there is no comparable rebuttal in the case of an accusation

relating to lack of virtue. If a man acts unjustly or uncharitably, or in a cowardly or intemperate manner, 'I did it deliberately' cannot on any interpretation lead to exculpation. So, we may say, a virtue is not, like a skill or an art, a mere capacity: it must actually engage the will.

II

I shall now turn to another thesis about the virtues, which I might express by saying that they are *corrective*, each one standing at a point at which there is some temptation to be resisted or deficiency of motivation to be made good. As Aristotle put it, virtues are about what is difficult for men, and I want to see in what sense this is true, and then to consider a problem in Kant's moral philosophy in the light of what has been said.

Let us first think about courage and temperance. Aristotle and Aquinas contrasted these virtues with justice in the following respect. Justice was concerned with operations and courage and temperance with passions.¹² What they meant by this seems to have been, primarily, that the man of courage does not fear immoderately nor the man of temperance have immoderate desires for pleasure, and that there was no corresponding moderation of a passion implied in the idea of justice. This particular account of courage and temperance might be disputed on the ground that a man's courage is measured by his action and not by anything as uncontrollable as fear; and similarly that the temperate man who must on occasion refuse pleasures need not *desire* them any less than the intemperate man. Be that as it may

(and something will be said about it later) it is obviously true that courage and temperance have to do with particular springs of action as justice does not. Almost any desire can lead a man to act unjustly, not even excluding the desire to help a friend or to save a life, whereas a cowardly act must be motivated by fear or a desire for safety, and an act of intemperance by a desire for pleasure, perhaps even for a particular range of pleasures such as those of eating or drinking or sex. And now, going back to the idea of virtues as correctives one may say that it is only because fear and the desire for pleasure often operate as temptations that courage and temperance exist as virtues at all. As things are we often want to run away not only where that is the right thing to do but also where we should stand firm; and we want pleasure not only where we should seek pleasure but also where we should not. If human nature had been different there would have been no need of a corrective disposition in either place, as fear and pleasure would have been good guides to conduct throughout life. So Aquinas says, about the passions

They may incite us to something against reason, and so we need a curb, which we name *temperance*. Or they may make us shirk a course of action dictated by reason, through fear of dangers or hardships. Then a person needs to be steadfast and not run away from what is right; and for this *courage* is named.¹³

As with courage and temperance so with many other virtues: there is, for instance, a virtue of industriousness only because idleness is a temptation; and of humility only because men tend to think too well of themselves. Hope is a virtue because despair too is a temptation; it might have been that no one cried that all was lost

except where he could really see it to be so, and in this case there would have been no virtue of hope.

With virtues such as justice and charity it is a little different, because they correspond not to any particular desire or tendency that has to be kept in check but rather to a deficiency of motivation; and it is this that they must make good. If people were as much attached to the good of others as they are to their own good there would no more be a general virtue of benevolence than there is a general virtue of self-love. And if people cared about the rights of others as they care about their own rights, no virtue of justice would be needed to look after the matter, and rules about such things as contracts and promises is not a virtue in everyone, any more than industriousness is, for in some it is rather an over-anxious concern for safety and propriety, and a determination to keep away from people or situations which are apt to bring trouble with them; and by such defensiveness much good is lost. It is the same with temperance. Intemperance can be an appalling thing, as it was with Henry VIII of whom Wolsey¹⁴ remarked that

rather than he will either miss or want any part of his will or appetite, he will put the loss of one half of his realm in danger.

Nevertheless in some people temperance is not a virtue, but is rather connected with timidity or with a grudging attitude to the acceptance of good things. Of course what is best is to live boldly yet without imprudence or intemperance, but the fact is that rather few can manage that.

■ ■ ■ QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What is intemperance?
2. What are Aquinas's three virtues?
3. Why are the virtues said to be beneficial?
4. What vices does Foot refer to?
5. How does temptation help in defining virtues?
6. How do you define the virtue wisdom?
7. Why is hope a virtue?

■ ■ ■ QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Foot gives most of her attention to the cardinal virtues. Write an essay that examines the most important vices. Foot says that virtues are beneficial to the individual and society. What is the effect of vices on the individual and society? The question of temptation is raised in the essay in relation to the vices. What is the role of temptation in helping to define the vices?
2. The virtue of wisdom is discussed late in the essay, but it seems to be among the most important of the virtues. Write an essay that defines wisdom as you understand it. Be sure to ask your peers, your parents, or any people you feel show a degree of wisdom what they think characterizes that virtue. What examples in your own life help you construct a definition? What examples can help your definition?
3. Explain in a brief essay why Foot tells us that virtues are about what is difficult. What is so difficult about each virtue? Explain the difficulties you see in your own environment, observing the behavior of others. Which virtues seem the most challenging? Then, turn to yourself and explain which of the virtues is the most challenging for you.

4. Why is pride a specific vice? People are told to be proud of their achievements, proud of their parents or their children, and proud of their nation. Are these beneficial qualities? What makes them beneficial, and to whom? What kind of pride can you determine is absolutely a vice? Query others on this point, then do some research into the concept of pride as a dangerous thing. What examples can you provide that will help us understand why pride is a vice?
5. The cardinal virtues are called moral virtues. What makes them moral? Write an essay that defends the words *moral* and *morality* in relation to the four cardinal virtues. Are faith, hope, and charity also moral virtues? What is the relation of the concept of morality to the concept of wisdom? How do you define immorality?
6. Foot admits that one operates in terms of one's self-interest. In that case, is it not true that there are some situations in which one's own interest conflicts with following a virtuous life? The virtue of courage is one that will often put a courageous person at risk of not following a pattern of self-interest. What situations can you establish that would demonstrate a conflict of interest between acting virtuously and acting in your self-interest? Would giving in to a vice, like cowardliness, be legitimate if doing so aligned with self-interest?

CONNECTIONS

1. Foot is known for her affection for the work of Aristotle, and she refers to him in relation to establishing the nature of the virtues. After reading "[The Aim of Man](#)", explain how close their understandings of the concepts of virtues and vices are and, where appropriate, explain their differences. Foot complains about the terminology being slightly different, but what other differences do you feel are important enough to discuss?
2. What principal virtues and vices are examined in W. E. B. Du Bois's essay, "[The Souls of White Folk](#)"? Examine not only the cardinal virtues and their respective vices but also the theological virtues of Aquinas and the lesser virtues and vices that Foot introduces in her essay. After your preliminary examination, make an argument that

supports the view that Du Bois's essay is a moral, not just political, examination of European behavior up to 1920. Which vice does Du Bois most condemn? What virtues does Du Bois find most lacking, and which does he seem to praise most highly?



Michael Gazzaniga *Toward a Universal Ethics*



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MICHAEL GAZZANIGA (b. 1939) is professor of psychology at the University of California at Santa Barbara. He is among the most distinguished scientists currently studying the relationship of the mind to the brain. When he was a student at the California Institute of Technology, Gazzaniga's mentor was Roger Sperry,

who pioneered important research into the split-brain phenomenon. Sperry relieved severely impaired sufferers of epilepsy by severing the corpus callosum, the information-bearing tissues connecting the left hemisphere to the right hemisphere of the brain. Resultant research at first seemed to indicate that the two hemispheres were so distinct as to almost represent different personalities. Ultimately, research demonstrated that the left hemisphere is usually specialized to deal with language, writing, reading, and math skills, while the right hemisphere is usually specialized to deal with spatial relations and visual, musical, and artistic skills. Gazzaniga's early book *The Bisected Brain* (1970) was among the first general explanations of the implications of this body of brain research.

Since then, various kinds of brain analysis using electromagnetic imaging and other techniques have broadened our understanding of the function of the brain. Research has found with some precision the locations in the brain that govern memory and the acquisition of memories, the areas excited by certain emotions, and the rate of development of important areas of the brain, such as the prefrontal lobe, which governs social and antisocial behavior. The fact that the prefrontal lobe does not develop fully until about twenty-one years of age has been taken as an indication that youthful irrationality is to some extent a matter of immature brain development, not just a matter of character failure.

Gazzaniga is prominent as a cognitive neuroscientist, which is to say a student of the interaction of the brain and the mind it supports. He has served on the President's Council for Bioethics,

advising the government on a wide variety of ethical issues arising from brain research. One ethical issue, for example, has to do with the concern that there may be people who are “hardwired” to be antisocial and potentially criminal. Some scientists contend that evolutionary forces made some brains naturally prone to violence as a means of survival. Such a characteristic may be helpful in the wild, but in a complex social system that behavior is a deficit. The result is that philosophers and scientists are continually debating the question of how ethically responsible a person who is naturally violent can be.

In his research, Gazzaniga has concluded that even such evolutionary traits do not mean that we are deprived of free will. He feels that people are socialized in ways that may make them prone to violence, but that the very act of socialization implies that people can control themselves if they wish to. One’s will is not overridden by one’s inclinations. Of course, this is a very hotly contested opinion, particularly in court, where the temporary insanity defense is often used as an excuse for violent behavior. Brain lesions are sometimes blamed for irrational behavior, too, but Gazzaniga has determined that not even lesions can excuse criminal behavior. Yet there are documented instances of patients with brain tumors whose growing masses resulted in changed behavior and personality.

Gazzaniga has written widely on the interconnected subjects of the mind, the brain, and the will. His book *Mind Matters: How Mind and Brain Interact to Create Our Conscious Lives* (1988) addresses many of the problems that have attracted and baffled

neuroscientists concerned with consciousness, one of the most intractable puzzles of contemporary science. He reviews the research and the resultant understanding of the nature of the brain as a result of studies of split-brain patients as well as studies of the effects of brain chemistry on behavior. His recent book, *Who's in Charge? Free Will and the Science of the Brain* (2011), examines current research that demonstrates that the brain is a complex of many subsystems that operate at times independently and automatically. As a result, Gazzaniga asks how all of these separately functioning systems can aggregate into a single person who can imagine a freedom of will. As in much of his earlier work, he is pursuing the issue of how the brain functions to produce a sense of self that we feel is unique and independent.

The following selection is from *The Ethical Brain* (2005), which approaches the issues raised by psychologists who have appropriated neuroscience and tend to connect psychological disorders with anomalies in the physiology of the brain. Some research implies a form of determinism, a concept that has stimulated legal debate over whether humans really have a free will. A number of important studies imply that the brain, rather than a person's will, can determine a person's actions, at least to some extent. Gazzaniga reviews the research and cannot give credence to such a view. In his book, he explores the way the brain develops and ages. He takes on the legal issues centered on genetics and brain enhancement. Finally, he addresses the question of an ethics that takes into consideration what we know about the physiology of the brain.

GAZZANIGA'S RHETORIC

Gazzaniga is exploring a question that may have no absolute answer—yet. He is asking a serious question: Is ethical behavior hardwired in the brain through years of evolution? To begin answering, he has to take into consideration the moral questions raised and answered over the centuries by philosophers and religious leaders who created what he calls “stories” about the way we should behave. These early thinkers were working in what Gazzaniga might consider “the dark” because they knew nothing about the science of brain development and brain systems.

Gazzaniga explains that modern observations of the brain indicate that specific responses and resulting behaviors can be tracked with some clarity by brain scans. Moreover, specific areas of brain function seem to be responsible for various kinds of actions that all people perform. The seat of personality and the areas involved in moral choice are usually centered in the prefrontal lobe of the brain, while other areas are supportive and functional in decision making. Indeed, Gazzaniga refers to the brain as a “decision-making device” ([para. 12](#)).

In the beginning of his essay, Gazzaniga explores the question of evolution and our inheritance of genes from the earliest human population, when there were a mere ten thousand people on the planet. We have inherited their genes, and our genes are virtually the same as theirs. That raises the question, how much of our response when we make moral judgments is built into our brains as a matter of survival? In the process of considering this question, Gazzaniga refers to authorities in the world of

neuroscience. This is a key part of his rhetorical strategy, and it is effective because, as a scientist, he feels it is his responsibility to represent the work of other scientists who may or may not agree with him (most are working in similar scientific areas, but some are not). In any event, his rhetorical stance demands that he refer to the testimony of experts and not just tell a “story.”

The value of moral empathy, the ability to respond to the distress of others, and the willingness to come to the aid of others are useful to evolutionary survival in the long run. As social animals, we survive when we help others survive. Gazzaniga refers to this as social neuroscience, tying the urge to behave ethically to the evolutionary power of our genes and the physiology of the brain. He devotes quite a bit of time at the end of the passage to the issue of “reading minds.” By that, he means our ability to interact with others by imagining what they are possibly thinking, what they are doing, and what they may do. This is a skill that makes social intercourse possible and at the same time helps us be secure in our environment. Without that skill, he implies, we would self-destruct and the species itself would not survive. Gazzaniga refers to mirror neurons that are “believed to be responsible for ‘action understanding’—that is, understanding the actions of others” ([para. 30](#)).

Gazzaniga also explores the question of whether our moral decisions are more rational than they are intuitive. He points to gut instincts that propel people to make moral judgments and ethical decisions that are almost instantaneous. He also refers to some common ethical dilemmas, such as the “trolley problem” ([para.](#)

[16](#)), which involve making a decision that would influence the fate of either a small number of people or a large number of people. The rational issues in these problems are such that solving them involves thinking more than feeling. But Gazzaniga also establishes that there are emotional issues that combine with rational decisions to behave ethically. His point is that moral decisions have an emotional component that is measurable in brain scans.

His central concern is to decide, on the basis of our evolution and the physiology of our brain, whether there can be a universal ethics that transcends the limitations of our individual cultures. He hopes that scientific discoveries and scientific understandings will either replace or augment our dependence on “tales from the past.”

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Michael Gazzaniga’s “Toward a Universal Ethics.” Keeping them in mind during your first reading should help focus your attention.

1. What is the relationship of ethics to the survival of the species?
2. What do studies of the physiology of the brain reveal about moral behavior?
3. Do people have an innate moral sense?

From *The Ethical Brain*.

Toward a Universal Ethics

Ever-advancing human knowledge seeps into the assumptions of everyone on earth whether they like it or not. From Harvard Square to a remote village in Sri Lanka, people have concepts of a gene, a brain, the Internet, the good life. Affluent cultures and democracies gain from all this knowledge, even though the lessons of modern knowledge about the nature of the world may produce conflicts with some traditional beliefs. That is what is happening on the surface. Underneath these material gains is another, psychological reality. Modern knowledge is on a collision course with the ubiquitous personal spiritual belief systems of one kind or another that are held by billions of people. Putting it in secular terms, no one has told the kids yet there is no Santa Claus.

We are big animals, and only five thousand generations ago there were just ten thousand of us roaming the world. Our genes stem from those ten thousand people and are 99.9 percent the same. Ever since that time, we have been busy cooking up cultures and stumbling forward. Anyone who does not appreciate this fundamental fact of modern life is either clinging to heartfelt beliefs about the nature of life and the history of the world, or is quite simply out of the loop. This is the single most disturbing reality of modern-day citizenship and our notion of shared values.

Received wisdom—the thoughts of the giants of human history—is stunning, captivating, and intelligent. But for the most part it is

based on first guesses, as we know from current scientific and historical information. Aristotle, Socrates, Hume, Locke, Descartes, Aquinas, Darwin, Hobbes¹—all put forward explanations of human nature that still resonate today. Their thinking about approaches to life are brilliant schemas for how the world must be, based on the information made available to them at the time, and are the products of clear-thinking people. Religious movements throughout human history produced moral codes and interpretations and stories about what it means to be human—indeed, what it means to exist at all. All are part of our rich past. The harsh, cold fact, however, is that these rich, metaphoric, engaging ideas—whether philosophical or religious—are stories, although some are based on more evidence than others. Even if you do not believe or accept this as a given, you should be aware that this is what every modern-day secular university is teaching, either implicitly or explicitly.

What is more fascinating to me is that even though new data provide scientific and historical bases for new views about nature and our past, people can still disagree about whether there even *is* a human nature. As Steven Pinker² recently remarked before the President’s Council on Bioethics, “In much of the 20th Century, there was a widespread denial of the existence of human nature in Western intellectual life, and I will just present three representative quotations. ‘Man has no nature,’ from the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset. ‘Man has no instincts,’ from the anthropologist and public intellectual Ashley Montagu. ‘The human brain is capable of a full range of behaviors and

predisposed to none,' from the evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould."³

Yet we know there *is* something we call human nature, with fixed qualities and inevitable expression in any number of situations. We know that some fixed properties of mind come with us from the baby factory, that all humans possess certain skills and abilities other animals don't have, and that all of this makes up the human *condition*. And we now know that we are the products of an evolutionary process that has shaped our species, for better or for worse. We are big animals. The rest of our stories about our origins are just that, stories that comfort, cajole, and even motivate—but stories nonetheless.

This leaves us in a quandary and with a task. The quandary is daunting: to understand that most of our current beliefs and moral systems derive from theories, perhaps based on the logic of what our species' best minds through the ages, reacting to life's events, could posit about the nature of reality. For those who realize and believe this, the task and the challenge of modern humans is to try to discern whether our highly evolved human nature and culture benefit from an underlying universal ethics, a moral response to life's challenges that has been a feature of our species from the beginning. The question is, Do we have an innate moral sense as a species, and if so, can we recognize and accept it on its own terms? It is not a good idea to kill because it is not a good idea to kill, not because God or Allah or Buddha said it was not a good idea to kill.

Guessing about Our Moral Sense

Until recently, the possibility that our species has a built-in moral sense, a basic human capacity to make judgments about right and wrong, has been argued more by assertion and analysis of human behavior than by demonstrated biological fact. Especially rare, if not missing entirely from the argument, has been the fact that we could not draw upon how the brain works in morally challenging situations. Modern social scientists can get only so far in their efforts to understand human behavior. James Q. Wilson⁴ used analysis of social science research in his classic 1993 book, *The Moral Sense*, but admitted, “The truth, if it exists, is in the details ... I am not trying to discover ‘facts’ that will prove ‘values’; I am endeavoring to uncover the evolutionary, developmental, and cultural origins of our moral habits and our moral sense. But in discovering these origins, I suspect that we will encounter uniformities; and by revealing uniformities, I think that we can better appreciate what is general, nonarbitrary, and emotionally compelling about human nature.”⁵ Wilson, the distinguished political scientist from Harvard and now UCLA, suggested, “However much the scientific method is thought to be the enemy of morality, scientific findings provide substantial support for its existence and power.”⁶ Wilson cast an astonishingly wide net to make his case for an innate human moral sense. He reviewed not only the history of philosophy but also evolutionary theory, anthropology, criminology, psychology, and sociology. He concluded that no matter what intellectuals argue, there are certain universal, guiding moral instincts. In fact, they are so instinctual that they often get overlooked: “Much of the dispute

over the existence of human universals has taken the form of a search for laws and stated practices. But what is most likely to be universal are those impulses that, because they are so common, scarcely need to be stated in the form of a rule....”⁷ Highest among these are that all societies believe that murder and incest are wrong, that children are to be cared for and not abandoned, that we should not tell lies or break promises, and that we should be loyal to family.

Wilson rejected the idea that morality is purely a social construct—that we are constrained by the need to behave a certain way because of external factors: “For there to be a contract, whether to create a state or manage and exchange, there must first be a willingness to obey contracts; there must be in Durkheim’s⁸ phrase, some noncontractual elements of contract.”

Wilson may have been prescient. A series of studies suggesting that there *is* a brain-based account of moral reasoning have burst onto the scientific scene. It has been found that regions of the brain normally active in emotional processing are activated with one kind of moral judgment but not another. Arguments that have raged for centuries about the nature of moral decisions and their sameness or difference are now quickly and distinctly resolved with modern brain imaging. The short form of the new results suggests that when someone is willing to *act* on a moral belief, it is because the emotional part of his or her brain has become active when considering the moral question at hand. Similarly, when a morally equivalent problem is presented that he or she decides not to act on, it is because the emotional part of the brain

does not become active. This is a stunning development in human knowledge because it points the way toward figuring out how the brain's automatic response may predict our moral response.

Scanning for Moral Reasoning

First, to be able to assess moral reasoning, scientists have analyzed the psychology of different moral theories. In other words, they have asked what kinds of decisions or judgments a person needs to make in order to decide what actions to take. This careful assessment of moral reasoning is obviously tricky, and in a laboratory setting, ascertaining what kinds of decisions trigger what kinds of brain reactions is even trickier; but some clever researchers are doing just that.

Evolutionary psychology points out that moral reasoning is good for human survival—the ability to recognize a certain norm for behaving in society and to apply it to others and oneself helps one to survive and thrive. As William D. Casebeer,⁹ a young philosopher at the Air Force Academy, has written, “We are social creatures, and if we are to flourish in our social environments, we must learn how to reason well about what we should do.”¹⁰ The question, then, is whether this skill might be built in to the brain, hardwired by evolution.

To me, these kinds of issues may be where the true secrets about the uniqueness of the human brain, the human condition, lie. Research long ago recognized that the essential function of the human brain is to make decisions; it is a decision-making device.

On no dimension of human consciousness are more decisions made than on social issues, the second-by-second, minute-by-minute judgments we make all day long about our standing and situation in a social group. The enormous cerebral cortex—the huge expansion of capacity in the human brain—may be there for social processes such as our relentless need for social comparison. Could it be that these decisions are influenced by some kind of universal moral compass we all possess? This issue, along with others, is why the new field of social neuroscience is so exciting and potentially enlightening.

When a scientist wants to design experiments to see what brain centers become active during moral reasoning, he or she needs to examine moral reasoning itself. This is difficult, given how many different moral philosophies exist. Nonetheless, a good place to begin is with the three main Western philosophies: utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue theory—represented by the philosophers John Stuart Mill, Immanuel Kant, and Aristotle, respectively. Utilitarians believe in actions that produce the most happiness for the most people; in other words, they look to the bottom line. Deontologists don't worry about the outcome of an action but focus on the intention that produced it—it's more important not to violate another person's rights than to have an ideal outcome. Virtue theorists look to cultivate virtue and avoid vices.¹¹

Casebeer reviewed this trio of philosophies and concluded, “Jokingly, then, it could be said that these approaches emphasize different brain regions: frontal (Kant); prefrontal, limbic, and sensory (Mill); the properly coordinated action of all (Aristotle).”¹²

That goes to the heart of the question: Are there moral reasoning centers in the brain? It's surely not as simple as that, but it may well be that intricate and distributed neural networks are active when a person is making certain moral decisions. Can they be captured with modern brain-imaging technologies?

Research on moral cognition studies three main topics: moral emotions, theory of mind, and abstract moral reasoning. Moral emotions—those that motivate behavior—are driven mostly by the brain stem and limbic axis, which regulate basic drives such as sex, food, thirst, and so on. *Theory of mind* is the term for our ability to judge what others are thinking so that we can behave appropriately in response to them—an essential in moral reasoning because it guides our social behavior. The “mirror neurons” I discussed [earlier], the orbital frontal cortex, the medial structures of the amygdala, and the superior temporal sulcus are believed to be responsible for theory-of-mind processes. Finally, abstract moral reasoning, brain imaging is showing us, uses many brain systems.

The dilemma in abstract moral reasoning studies most often presented by researchers to volunteers is the trolley problem, one version of which I described [earlier]. In this version, a trolley is hurtling down a track, headed straight for five people. You have to decide whether to let it hit the five people or, up close and personal, throw a person standing next to you onto the tracks to stop the trolley from hitting the other five.

Most people claim they won't throw the nearby person in front of the trolley. At the same time, they will pull a switch and divert the train to another track, which will spare the five people even though the switched train will run into and kill a single person. So the question is, Where do these gut reactions come from? Is there a neural basis for these two prevalent responses? Have they been honed through evolution?

Joshua Greene,¹³ a neurophilosopher from Princeton, raises two additional commonly used examples. Say you are driving along in your new car and you see a man on the side of the road. He has been in an accident and is bloody. You could take him to the hospital and save his life; however, you would get blood all over your new car. Is it morally okay to leave him there? Or take another scenario. You receive a request in the mail saying that if you send in \$100, you will save the lives of ten starving children. Is it okay to not send in the money?

Gut instinct, or morality, is a result of processes selected for over the evolutionary process. We have cognitive processes that allow us to make quick moral decisions that will increase our likelihood of survival.

In analyzing these kinds of dilemmas, Greene and his colleagues found that while the choices are the same on the surface—do

nothing and preserve your self-interest, or save lives at little cost to yourself—the difference is that the first scenario is personal whereas the second is impersonal. As already mentioned, Greene’s studies found that judgments of personal dilemmas such as those seen in the trolley problem involve more brain activity in areas associated with emotion and moral cognition. Why is this? From an evolutionary perspective the theory is that the neural structures that tie altruistic instincts to emotion may have been selected for over time because helping people immediately is beneficial. Gut instinct, or morality, is a result of processes selected for over the evolutionary process. We have cognitive processes that allow us to make quick moral decisions that will increase our likelihood of survival. If we are wired to save a guy right in front of us, we all survive better. In the case of the money contribution, long-distance altruism just isn’t as necessary; out of sight, out of mind. There is no dire need.

This brings us back to the central issue of whether moral truths are really universal truths, or whether they are merely opinions, individual gut instincts. When making moral judgments, are we perceiving external truths or expressing internal attitudes? The new brain imaging results are highly suggestive that our brains are responding to the great underlying moral dilemmas. It is as if all the social data of the moment, the personal survival interests we each possess, the cultural experience we have undergone, and the basic temperament of our species all feed into the subconscious mechanisms we all possess and out comes a response, an urging for either action or inaction. This is the moral

spark Wilson was talking about. This is the glue that keeps our species, over the long haul, from destroying itself.

Marc Hauser¹⁴ has addressed this issue, as we saw [earlier]. He reasoned that if moral judgments were derived from rational processes, one would predict that people from different cultures, of different ages and sexes, would respond differently to a common challenge. He also reasoned that they would have readily available and articulate justifications for their decisions. Hauser showed that irrespective of sex, age, and culture, most subjects responded in a similar fashion, making similar moral choices. Further, and most important, none could articulate or justify their responses. In short, there seem to be common subconscious mechanisms that are activated in all members of our species in response to moral challenges. When the participants in Hauser's research were challenged to explain their decision, none of them were particularly rational or logical. Their explanations seemed to be the product of personal interpreters spinning out some theory or other that seemed right to them on the spot.

Most moral judgments are intuitive, as I've noted throughout this book. We have a reaction to a situation, or an opinion, and we form a theory as to why we feel the way we do. In short, we have an automatic reaction to a situation—a brain-derived response. Upon feeling that response, we come to believe we are reacting to absolute truths. What I am suggesting is that these moral ideas are generated by our interpreter, by our brains, yet we form a theory about their absolute "rightness." Characterizing the

formation of a moral code in this way puts the challenge directly on us. As Greene points out, “It is one thing to care about the plight of the poor, and another to think that one’s caring is objectively correct.”¹⁵ It looks like it may be correct after all.

Somehow our brains are cued to be alert to the mental states of others as we struggle to play a productive role in developing a moral code in a social group. Somehow it would seem the universally recognized mechanisms of self-survival have been co-opted and are used to work in more social settings. Evolution is saving the group, not just the person, because it would seem that saving the group saves the person. To do this, we have somehow become mind readers, reflexively.

How We Read Minds

There are two major theories about how we “read minds”—that is, how we attribute certain mental or emotional states to others in order to explain or predict their behavior. The first is simulation theory (ST), whereby, very simply, we put ourselves in another person’s shoes and figure out what we’d do in his or her situation. This requires us to use our imaginations to feed in “fake” data and to be able to hold the fake data separate from real life so that we don’t act on it but only imagine what we would do, given the circumstances.¹⁶

Rivaling ST is the redundant-sounding theory-theory, or TT. “TT maintains that the mental terms and concepts used in understanding human behavior get their predictive and

explanatory credentials by being embedded in a folk theory of mind.”¹⁷ This folk psychology, the theory goes, is a set of rules that we use to judge and gauge others’ behavior. We need not be conscious of this set of rules, or even of using them; they are just there. But where does the theory come from? Here is where TT comes up against the same problem that Greene raises about where moral truths come from, the nature-nurture dilemma. Are we born with the knowledge, or do the rules exist in the ether, available for us to learn? TT adherents differ on whether the theory is innate or learned, as well as on whether we use a distinct “theory of mind” module in the brain or some more continuous system of representations that produce the same effect. What theory-theorists agree on is that we are in fact using knowledge that is encoded in a theory to judge behavior.

ST, on the other hand, denies that we are using a theory or body of knowledge or rules to judge behavior; “rather our own mental processes are treated as a manipulable model of other minds.” Even though we may make generalizations that, say, people tend to do X in circumstances like Y, simulation theorists believe this approach is process driven rather than being based strictly on preexisting knowledge. “The basic idea is that if the resources our own brain uses to guide our own behavior can be put to work as a model of other people, then we have no need to store general information about what makes people tick: We just do the ticking for them.”¹⁸

A long and rich history of psychological research has outlined what is called the empathy altruism hypothesis, which seeks to

explain the pro-social behavior we engage in when we watch another human being in distress. We automatically and unconsciously simulate this distress in our minds, which in turn makes us feel bad—not in an abstract way, but literally bad. We become infected by the other person’s negative feelings, and in order to alleviate this state in ourselves, we are motivated to action. A number of studies support this idea—that manipulating feelings toward an individual increases helping behavior. Looking at expressions of distress, for example, enhances helping behavior.¹⁹

Indeed, Adam Smith²⁰ was onto aspects of this thinking about social contagion. In 1759 he wrote, “When we see a stroke aimed and just ready to fall upon the leg or arm of another person, we naturally shrink and draw back our leg or our own arm; and when it does fall, we feel it in some measure, and are hurt by it as well as the sufferer ... Persons of delicate fibres and weak constitution of body complain, that in looking at the sores and ulcers which are exposed by beggars on the streets, they are apt to feel an itching or uneasy sensation in the correspondent part of their own bodies.”²¹

Countless experiments have been carried out to support this general idea. My former colleague at Dartmouth, John Lanzetta,²² and his colleagues demonstrated repeatedly that people tend to respond to the sense of touch, taste, pain, fear, joy, and excitement of others with analogous physiological activation patterns of their own. They literally feel the emotional states of others as their own.²³ This tendency to react to the distress of

others appears to be innate: it has been demonstrated in newborn infants, who cry in response to the distress of other infants within the first days of life.²⁴

In considering all these arguments, I believe the STs have it right. From a neuroscience perspective, the mirror neuron could support the ST view of how this works. Mirror neurons are believed to be responsible for “action understanding”—that is, understanding the actions of others. While we can’t ethically do single-cell recording of mirror neurons in humans, some neurophysiological and brain imaging experiments suggest that mirror neurons do exist in humans and that they function to help with action understanding as well as action imitation.²⁵

The neurophysiology of what might be called social process started in 1954, when Henri Gastaut²⁶ and his colleagues in Marseille noted in EEG studies that human subjects have a brain wave response not only when performing actions themselves but when watching others perform actions. Gastaut’s research has since been confirmed by many studies using both additional brain measurement techniques, such as the more advanced magnetoencephalographic technique, and stimulation techniques, such as transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), a noninvasive technique for electrical stimulation of the nervous system. Another important finding of the more recent studies has been that the spinal cord inhibits the execution of the observed action, “leaving the cortical motor system free to ‘react’ to that action without the risk of every movement generation.”²⁷ Rizzolatti²⁸ and his colleagues point out that, in total, the TMS studies indicate that

the human mirror system not only exists, but differs from the monkey system in a key way: it seems to recognize meaningless movements, such as vague gestures, as well as goal-directed movements.

Why is that important? Because these are the skills needed to imitate movements. This could suggest that the human mirror neuronal system is the basis for learning by imitation.

Human imaging studies are seeking to identify the complex network that is activated by the human mirror system. This is important to the search for the biology of moral reasoning. If we know what part of the brain is activated when observing an action, we can start to understand what mechanisms the brain *uses to understand the world*. For instance, if observing a barking dog activates my motor and visual areas, but seeing a picture of a barking dog activates only my visual area, this suggests not only that we process the information from these two situations differently, but that this different processing may evoke a different psychological experience of the observation. Observing a dog barking activates my motor system and therefore creates a deeper resonance with the observed action; seeing a picture of a barking dog just doesn't get "in my bones" in the same way.

Rizzolatti suggests that when we learn new motor patterns, it is possible we break them down into basic movements, via the mirror mechanism, and that once the mirror system activates these basic motor representations, they are recombined into the action. He goes on to argue, as did Robin Allott²⁹ before him, that

the mirror system, with its role in imitation and action understanding, may be the evolutionary precursor to language.³⁰ In other words, we went from understanding others' gestures, to understanding abstract representations of meaning—speech. This idea is supported by research suggesting hand and mouth gestures are linked in humans.

V. S. Ramachandran's³¹ work on anosognosia patients—the stroke patients who deny their paralysis—indicates another crucial role mirror neurons may play in humans. Ramachandran found that some patients deny not only their own paralysis but the obvious paralysis of others—something he suggests may be due to damage to mirror neurons. “It’s as if anytime you want to make a judgment about someone else’s movements, you have to run a VR [virtual reality] simulation of the corresponding movements in your own brain, and without mirror neurons you cannot do this.”³² If this is so, it would seem that mirror neurons support the simulation theorists’ view that the brain is built to feel not only our own experiences but those of others.

The tension between ST and TT gets us back to the universal ethics dilemma. Are the moral truths we seem to live by a set of rules that exist independently of us, rules that we learn and live by? Or are these rules the result of our brains using built-in systems to empathize and thereby predict behavior and act accordingly? Whatever the answer, one thing is clear: the rules exist.

I believe, therefore, that we should look not for a universal ethics comprising hard-and-fast truths, but for the universal ethics that arises from being human, which is clearly contextual, emotion-influenced, and designed to increase our survival. This is why it is hard to arrive at absolute rules to live by that we can all agree on. But knowing that morals are contextual and social, and based on neural mechanisms, can help us determine certain ways to deal with ethical issues. This is the mandate for neuroethics: to use our understanding that the brain reacts to things on the basis of its hardwiring to contextualize and debate the gut instincts that serve the greatest good—or the most logical solutions—given specific contexts.

I am convinced that we must commit ourselves to the view that a universal ethics is possible, and that we ought to seek to understand it and define it. It is a staggering idea, and one that on casual thought seems preposterous. Yet there is no way out. We now understand how tendentious our beliefs about the world and the nature of human experience truly are, and how dependent we have become on tales from the past. At some level we all know this. At the same time, our species wants to believe in something, some natural order, and it is the job of modern science to help figure out how that order should be characterized.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What does Gazzaniga mean when he says that modern knowledge is on a collision course with traditional beliefs ([para. 1](#))? Do you agree?

2. How important is it for Gazzaniga's discussion that we think of ourselves as "big animals" ([para. 2](#))?
3. What is the significance of "theory of mind," our ability to judge what other people are thinking and so respond to them ([para. 15](#))?
4. In [paragraph 4](#), the question of human nature is broached. Is there such a thing as human nature?
5. Is morality specifically a social construct? What evidence informs your answer?
6. Do humans have an innate moral sense? What is Gazzaniga's view regarding an innate moral sense?
7. What are the limitations of the philosophical views of human nature described in [paragraph 3](#)?

■ ■ ■ ■ SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. In [paragraph 2](#), Gazzaniga says, "This is the single most disturbing reality of modern-day citizenship and our notion of shared values." What is he referring to, and how well does the remainder of the essay address the issues that he raises in this and the preceding paragraph? Do you agree that the rise of scientific understanding of brain functions will conflict with the "stories" that constitute much of what we think we know about human nature?
2. Early in the essay, Gazzaniga considers whether human nature exists. He quotes authorities who deny that there are instincts or anything like a human nature and assert that the brain has no predisposition but is adaptable to "a full range of behaviors" ([para. 4](#)). Argue the case either for or against the existence of human nature. Consider what role the recent studies of brain physiology might play in this debate. Why is whether or not human nature exists an important question to answer?
3. Review the "trolley problem" ([para. 16](#)). If you were in a situation in which you could control the outcome of an event that would kill either

one innocent person or five people who may or may not be innocent, what would you do? Construct a different “trolley problem” and explore the possibilities that would face someone making a moral decision in response to that problem. Why are such decisions difficult? Is it possible to have an intuitive response to such problems? Can a gut instinct inform one when dealing with such problems?

4. When considering the question of “an underlying universal ethics,” Gazzaniga says, “The question is, Do we have an innate moral sense as a species, and if so, can we recognize and accept it on its own terms?” ([para. 6](#)). He then declares, “It is not a good idea to kill because it is not a good idea to kill, not because God or Allah or Buddha said it was not a good idea to kill.” What does he mean? How does this line of reasoning lead us to consider a universal ethics?
5. In [paragraph 11](#), Gazzaniga says that evolutionary psychology supports the view that moral behavior is good for human survival. That leads him to ask “whether this skill might be built in to the brain, hardwired by evolution.” What is your view on this possibility? What, in addition to a moral sense, might be hardwired into the brain? Are talents, such as those possessed by musical prodigies, examples of hardwiring in the brain? What about intelligence, athletic skill, or risk taking? If such hardwiring exists, could it be a result of evolution?
6. To what extent do you agree that the emotional parts of the brain control moral behavior? Observe your own emotional reaction to events that demand a moral response and interview others to see if they have similar emotional reactions to morally complex situations. How much are you informed by your emotional responses to immoral behavior or unethical practices? Are your emotions good moral guides? Do you think it is universally true that emotions inform moral decisions?

CONNECTIONS

1. For Gazzaniga, Aristotle’s “[The Aim of Man](#)” is essentially just a story because it is not rooted in scientific study and does not take into

account what we in the modern world know about brain development and evolution. Yet Aristotle's discussion of ethics still guides the thinking of many modern philosophers and ethicists. Given Gazzaniga's views, how much of Aristotle's ideas would he think are still meaningful and relevant to modern society? What would Gazzaniga reject, and what would he accept? On what basis might Gazzaniga entirely disregard the views that Aristotle holds most dear?

2. Which of the other authors in Part 5, "Ethics," would have the most problem with Gazzaniga's views that there might be a universal ethics based on evolutionary developments in the human brain? Consider closely the work of W. E. B. Du Bois ("[The Souls of White Folk](#)"), Mary Midgely ("[Trying Out One's Sword](#)"), and Kwame Anthony Appiah ("[If You're Happy and You Know It](#)"). Which of these authors would be most opposed to Gazzaniga, and which would be most in agreement?



Kwame Anthony Appiah *If You're Happy and You Know It*



Basso Cannarsa/Agence Opale/Alamy

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH was born in London in 1954 and is currently a professor of philosophy and law at New York University. He teaches in New York and Abu Dhabi as well as other overseas campuses of New York University. As a child he was raised in Ghana, the home of his father, Joseph Emmanuel

Appiah, a lawyer and politician, but he also spent time in England at the family home of his mother, Enid Margaret Appiah. Appiah's grandfather was Sir Stafford Cripps, a noted British statesman. Appiah's schooling led him to Cambridge University for his Ph.D. in philosophy. His cosmopolitan experience of being raised in Africa and Europe and then having a career in the United States has given him a unique view of international politics and the position of nations both rich and poor in the world today.

Appiah is somewhat skeptical of the ability of well-meaning social groups to help those less fortunate in other nations. He is not opposed to charity, but he sees that the virtuous organizations that try to help the poor have a limited scope and ability to make substantial change. His view is that the responsibility for the well-being of people in Africa, for example, lies in the hands of the governments in Africa. Only local governments can make the changes necessary to improve the lot of their citizens. This view has not met with approval from some Africanists, particularly those who are Afrocentric. For Appiah, Afrocentrism is similar to nineteenth-century Eurocentrism and thus represents a limited view of the world.

Appiah is a philosopher but also a novelist. His work is wide-ranging and remarkable for the variety of interests covered. Among the books that concern themselves with racial issues is *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (1992), which explores the question of African identity, a subject that he has considered deeply. In *Color Conscious: The Political Morality*

of Race (1998), he examines the entire question of race: what it is, how it is expressed, and how it has affected different cultures.

The moral issues involved in racism are among his chief concerns. In *The Ethics of Identity* (2007), Appiah examines the ways in which people regard their own identity in relation to their religion, their nationality, their race, and the groups to which they choose to belong. He examines the constraints that are imposed on individuals by the choices they make in terms of the organizations and institutions to which they attach themselves.

In *Experiments in Ethics* (2008), from which the following selection is taken, Appiah aims to bring philosophy and the social sciences together in a tradition he sees as tracing back to Aristotle. The book derives from an invitation to give the Flexner Lectures at Bryn Mawr College in 2005. The term *experiments* in the title implies much the same as the term *essays*, in that they refer to the writer trying out ideas in ways that help the reader come to a new understanding of the issues at hand.

APPIAH'S RHETORIC

Because Appiah began teaching the philosophy of language and the uses of semantics, or the study of meaning, his care in the use of words is apparent from the start. Yet, his style is direct because his purpose in "If You're Happy and You Know It" is to reach general readers, not specialists in the field of philosophical ethics.

The problem of definition and semantics is addressed in the first paragraph because the word that Aristotle uses, *eudaimonia*, is usually translated simply as happiness. But Appiah makes the point that it is not really a simple translation because the concept Aristotle refers to by the word seems to be sometimes misused or misunderstood. Appiah uses an example of the way the names of football teams get changed, like the Jets, who once were the Titans, now play the Titans, who were previously the Oilers. By starting out with a question about the significance of the most important word that Aristotle uses to express happiness, Appiah forces us to look closely not just at *eudaimonia* but at the word *happiness* itself, which we all use without thinking very carefully about its meaning.

In [paragraph 3](#) Appiah brings the discussion into the contemporary world, referring to TV and movies which use the word *happiness* casually. When parents say they want their children to be happy, Appiah wants to know precisely what they mean. Therefore, the main rhetorical strategy Appiah uses is definition, and to achieve a satisfactory definition, he analyzes not only words but their contexts, situations, and relationships.

The emphasis on relationships is central because Appiah tries to establish that happiness is not a strictly solitary experience, but in fact is a social experience. Most people would find this unusual until he finishes his analysis and proposes a scenario in which the person we love merely pretends to love us back. Would we then really be happy even if we think we are? That line of reasoning leads us to the question of whether or not the concept of

happiness is entirely subjective. Ultimately Appiah suggests that the standards by which we decide whether we are happy or not cannot just be set by ourselves. If we set the standards too low we may risk a life that is essentially wasted. If we get pleasure from harming others Appiah says we cannot claim to be happy because the standards of sadism are morally wrong. Harming others is not beneficial to the individual or society.

Finally, Appiah returns to Aristotle and says in [paragraph 9](#) that happiness is connected to virtue. He says, “doing what is morally right is one of the constituents of human flourishing.” A sinner may think he is happy, but as a sinner he is a less successful human being. We would want such a person to be better. In [paragraph 11](#), Appiah says “What we want has to be *worth* wanting: it has to be consistent with human decency and connected with humanly intelligible values.”

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Kwame Anthony Appiah’s “If You’re Happy and You Know It.” Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What does *eudaimonia* mean?
2. What does it mean to say happiness maybe subjective?
3. Why is happiness a social rather than solitary condition?

If You're Happy and You Know It

Lucentio: And therefore, Tranio, for the time I study,

Virtue and that part of philosophy

Will I apply that treats of happiness

By virtue specially to be achieved.

—William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*

Ethics is, in that formulation of Aristotle's, about the ultimate aim or end of human life, the end he called *eudaimonia*. Of course, philosophical ethics has not always shared that vision; nor should philosophers be confident that history has given them a special lien upon the subject of human flourishing. There's a sense, as I suggested in the introduction, that the members of my profession became philosophers in the way that the Vlach,¹ after the union of Wallachia and Moldavia in the mid-nineteenth century, became "Romanians," claiming a glorious ancient pedigree through a nomenclatural coup. The slippery movements of group designations are familiar to all historians, not to mention any sports fan who has watched the Jets, who used to be the Titans, play the Titans, who used to be the Oilers.

Still, our names can express our aspirations. In the pages that follow, then, I want to sidle up to that great end of ethics, see how we might best make sense of it, and offer a final accounting of

what “naturalism” means within the realm of human values—and within the project of *eudaimonia*.

So what is that devoutly-to-be-hoped-for thing, anyway? If you think of *eudaimonia* as happiness, and believe, as many modern people claim to do, that happiness is just a matter of satisfying your felt desires, you will think that evaluations are just desires gussied up with fancy talk. The antiquity of this temptation is shown by the antiquity of the rebuttals: through more than two millennia, thinkers have vigorously demonstrated that mere subjective contentment isn't a worthwhile aim. One way to deepen our grasp of *eudaimonia* is to understand why “happiness” is, at least for us today, a terribly misleading translation of that Greek word.

How many times on TV and in the movies have we heard a parent tell a child, “I just want you to be happy”? But what does that mean? Here are a few notions you'll encounter these days. First, happiness is a feeling; you are happy if and only if you think you are happy. For a feeling just is a state of mind, like a pain, that you can't have without being aware that you have it. A more sophisticated thought often follows: whether you are happy or not is to be decided by standards set by you. Together, these claims amount to construing happiness as something deeply subjective: it's a feeling; we all know whether we have it, and each of us sets the standards for our own happiness. Call this the *subjective conception of happiness*.

As philosophers have never tired of pointing out, this isn't really a conception that withstands scrutiny. No loving and thoughtful parents could mean that they just wanted a child to be subjectively happy. Consider the happiness that comes from a successful relationship. If all that matters is how you feel, then if you *feel* it's going well, it *is* going well, and it's of no consequence if your partner is merely feigning affection, so long as the illusion is maintained. But, of course, what matters in relationships requires that our feelings be apt; it requires the truth of at least some of the beliefs that partially constitute those feelings. When Dad tells his daughter he wants her to be happy, he doesn't mean it's fine if her boyfriend goes on *pretending* to love her. It's not just that a boyfriend who doesn't love you is, no doubt, less reliable than one who does. Daddy, especially a soap-opera daddy, could be rich enough to make it worth the boyfriend's while to keep up the act, and his daughter would still be in trouble. People who don't grasp this—who care only whether their beloveds *appear* to love them—are simply not capable of love.

The philosopher Robert Nozick² proposed a famous thought experiment along these lines in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. Imagine there was an “experience machine” that would provide any experience you wanted. “Superduper neuropsychologists could stimulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book,” he wrote, even though you'd just be floating in a tank with electrodes plugged into your brain. Would you plug in? Films like the Wachowski brothers' *The Matrix* or Cameron Crowe's *Vanilla Sky* — or Alejandro Amenábar's marvelous *Abre*

los Ojos (Open Your Eyes), on which it was based—exploit the possibility of something like an experience machine to raise exactly the question Nozick asks. And his answer—that what matters is not only how our life feels, but also whether our experiences and achievements are real—is not only right but right in a way that Aristotle would surely have thought obvious. Whatever Aristotle meant by *eudaimonia*, he didn't mean subjective happiness.

To say that feelings aren't the only things that matter is not to go to the other extreme and say that they don't matter at all. No doubt some of the experiences I have in my relationships are part of what is good about them, part of what makes the relationships contribute to my flourishing, to what is good in my life. Loving couples know the feeling of walking hand in hand under the stars, confident in each other's love; lying together at night, conscious of each other's breathing, feeling the warmth of each other's bodies. These experiences are valuable parts of a life in love. Again, though, the experiences must be in some sense apt. The shared life is a good life because two people are really making a life together: if your partner is not a real person but an automaton or an electronic phantasm, you're living in what we appropriately call a fool's paradise. You may think your life is going well, but you're wrong.

One reason that you can't set your own standards for happiness is that some

standards are morally wrong.

What about that thesis that each person sets the standards for his or her own happiness? People find it plausible, I think, because they follow a train of thought that goes like this: “What matters in your life matters because it matters *to you*; because it is one of your aims. Succeeding in what matters to you is what’s important—important in the sense that getting it contributes to your happiness, your *eudaimonia*. Anything you care about matters to you. Ergo, getting what you care about contributes to your happiness.” Here is one of the many places where morality matters for ethics, and one of the many ways in which *eudaimonia* is shown to be indissolubly social, because the question of what we owe to others—in the classical formulation, *suum cinque tribuens* (“giving to each his due”)—is inherently interpersonal. Suppose, like a character in the fantasies of the Marquis de Sade,³ I take pleasure in humiliating other people. That I care to humiliate people doesn’t mean that if I succeed in doing so my life is going well. You can’t set success at sadism as one of the aims of your life and thereby make a life of cruelty a good life. So one reason that you can’t set your own standards for happiness is that some standards are morally wrong.

This helps explain why so many thinkers, from Socrates on, have connected happiness with virtue. However many things you have achieved, however much pleasure you have experienced, however many friends you have, however wonderful your relationship with your spouse and however successful your

children, if you have achieved all this at the expense of neglecting your moral obligations, your existence is less successful than it would have been had you paid proper attention to what morality demands. As I argued in the second chapter, this connection between morality and ethics is internal: doing what is morally right is one of the constituents of human flourishing. So we don't need to believe in a providential invisible hand, assigning happiness to the saints, to insist on the connection between virtue and happiness, properly understood. A sinner may think he's happy. But insofar as he's a sinner, his life is thereby made less successful, whether he knows it or not. Whatever it is that he wants, the rest of us should want him, truly, to be better than he is.

It's also true that some aims, however genuinely desired, are not significant enough to add to the value of a life. You cannot give a saucer of mud significance in your life simply by announcing you want it; and, indeed, if you find you do want it for no purpose, this is not a reason to go looking for a saucer of mud, but rather a reason to seek clinical help.³ If the standards were whatever you decided they were, you could make your life a smashing success simply by setting the standards absurdly low. Someone could set as his aim that he should do whatever job came along moderately well and make enough money to have fun from time to time. "I am satisfied," he might say, looking back on his life at the end. "I had fun occasionally, I was a work-to-rule bureaucrat; I avoided the entanglements of love and friendship, which would only have risked my wanting things—like loyalty and reciprocation—that you can't guarantee." And we would say, rightly, that if that is all there

was to it, this person, far from having lived well, had wasted his life.

In short, you aren't flourishing just because you're getting what you want. We can grasp the alternative vision, shared by the soulless libertine or lifer—we can imagine a moment when, in Philip Larkin's mordant words, "every life became / a brilliant breaking of the bank, / A quite unlosable game"—but we cannot enter it.⁴ What we want has to be *worth* wanting: it has to be consistent with human decency and connected with humanly intelligible values. Aristotle's view was, indeed, that life was a challenge to be faced; that to live well was an achievement.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What is happiness?
2. Is happiness purely subjective?
3. How is virtue connected to happiness?
4. What is the connection between getting what you want and happiness?
5. How do feelings count when determining happiness?
6. How do you define moral behavior?
7. Why is morality connected with happiness?

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Explain why the subjective conception of happiness is not enough. Kwame Anthony Appiah gives a number of possible subjective

moments that might spell happiness to some people. But he does not believe it is enough to simply think we are happy just because we feel happy. What must be included in our experience to make happiness more than just a personal feeling? Of course, you may disagree with Appiah on this point, and if you do, explain yourself with the same rigor that Appiah uses in his analysis of subjective happiness, or happiness as a feeling. Analyze his argument and address it yourself in a careful essay.

2. Amartya Sen, a political philosopher, tells us that it is important that when justice is done that it appears to be done. He means that people must think justice is done—its actually having been done is not quite enough. Does this apply to happiness as well? Is it imperative that you think you are happy for you to be truly happy? Is an appearance/reality disjunction possible in the realm of happiness? Some people have said that it is enough to think you are happy for you to experience happiness. How true (or how false) is this in your experience? Explore these questions in an essay.
3. Appiah refers to the philosopher Robert Nozick and his theoretical “experience machine” that could cause someone to feel happiness by electrical stimulation. Why does Appiah feel this kind of machine may seem to produce happiness but that it is not real happiness? Why is real happiness better than artificial happiness if happiness is a feeling? Drugs may be able to produce the euphoria associated with happiness, but Appiah would say it is not real happiness. Why would Appiah argue against a drug-induced state as being happiness? How might Aristotle have responded to the idea of artificial stimulation producing a feeling of happiness? How do you respond to that idea?
4. What is the problem with the idea of people setting the standard for their own happiness? Are there experiences or circumstances that regularly make you happy that would not be “enough” for other people? What is the problem with setting the standard too low? What is the problem with setting it too high? What kinds of standards do you see people around you setting in terms of reaching happiness? What standards do you set for yourself? How do people set such standards? Are they aware of doing so? Does it work? Why is there a problem with setting low standards as long as they produce some

form of happiness for the individual? Is Appiah wrong? What ethical issues does Appiah raise when he implies that the standards for happiness may possibly not be set by you?

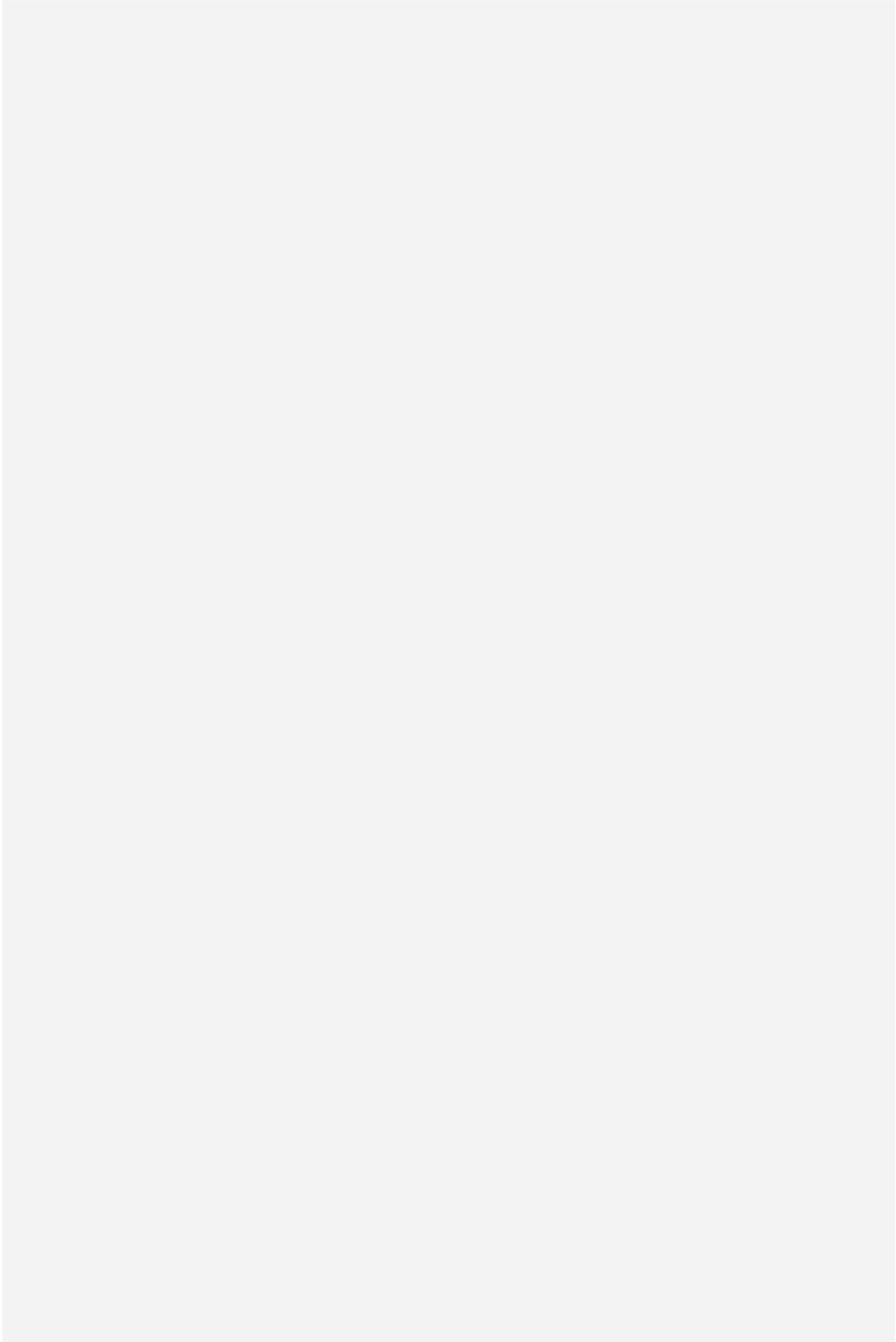
5. The German word *schadenfreude* describes the feeling of pleasure one gets when one sees someone else fail. “It is not enough that one succeed; others must fail” is an expression that describes a similar sentiment regarding people whose happiness derives from others’ pain. What ethical issues are at work in either of these descriptions of pleasure? If people do nothing to harm someone else, why would it be unethical for them to take pleasure from other people’s failure? Is there a moral issue here? Why would Appiah say that this is not really happiness? What more than taking pleasure in an experience or in a string of experiences is necessary for one to be truly happy? If people are happy watching someone else fail, how can we say that they are not really in possession of happiness, or what Aristotle called the greatest good?
6. Appiah says that for two millennia thinkers have concerned themselves with the idea that simple contentment, usually achieved by one getting what one wants, is not really the same as Aristotle’s *eudaimonia*. Contentment is not, therefore, happiness. Such a view is not necessarily acceptable to some people. Do you agree that contentment is not happiness, or do you feel that contentment is worth considering as a form of happiness? Explain your views by defining your terms and by your own analysis of the terms contentment and happiness.

CONNECTIONS

1. Both Aristotle (“[The Aim of Man](#)”) and Kwame Anthony Appiah, with reference to Socrates, tell us that happiness depends on virtue. Leading a virtuous life, they imply, is essential to achieving happiness. In a brief essay, explain why these philosophers may think virtue is the “soul” of happiness. Are you aware of the effects of virtue—or the lack of it—in producing a sense of happiness in people that you know or know about? What is a life of virtue? How difficult is it to

design and live a life of virtue in the environment in which you live? Is it more difficult to live a virtuous life today than it was in the past? What feelings does living life without virtue produce? Can it produce unhappiness? What insight into the virtuous life does Appiah give us? To what extent do you agree or disagree with him?

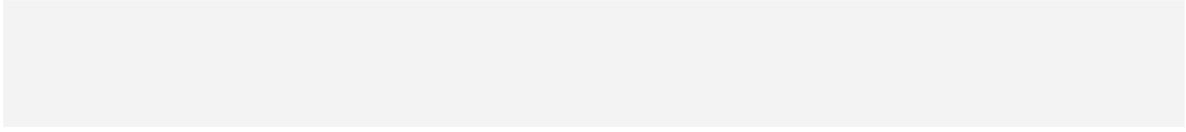
2. Both Philippa Foot ("[Trying Out One's Sword](#)") and Appiah talk about the power of virtue and the significance of living a virtuous life. Examine their essays and decide how similar are their views of the strength of virtues in everyday life. Appiah talks about happiness, and Foot seems to omit that consideration. What do you think Foot would say about how to achieve a happy life? What might they disagree on? How similar are their techniques of analyzing complex terms and ideas? Does there seem to be a consistent philosophical style?



Reflections on the Nature of Ethics

Now that you have read the selections in Part Five, "Ethics," consider in what ways these writers have helped further inform your views on ethics and its place in our world.

1. What is your view of the idea that happiness is the supreme good? Is this an ethical idea?
2. What is the result of assuming people are basically bad? How does that view affect your concept of ethical behavior?
3. Do you agree that happiness is closely related to virtuous behavior? How does virtue contribute to happiness?
4. How should people be educated in morality and ethics?
5. To what extent is ethical behavior a result of the company you keep?
6. What is the connection between materialism and ethical behavior?
7. How do ethics and morality operate in the law and government?
8. Where do you stand on the question of whether holding religious views is necessary to ensure moral behavior?
9. What is the effect of worldliness on the individual? Are you aware of worldliness in your own behavior?
10. What evidence suggests that we should accept or not accept the idea of a moral absolute?



Part Six GENDER

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

KAREN HORNEY

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR

JUDITH LORBER

MOLLY HASKELL

CATHERINE A. MACKINNON

JUDITH BUTLER

Introduction

Male and female represent the two sides of the great radical dualism. But in fact they are perpetually passing into one another. Fluid hardens to solid, solid rushes to fluid. There is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman.

—MARGARET FULLER (1810–1850)

Class, race, sexuality, gender, and all other categories by which we categorize and dismiss each other need to be excavated from the inside.

—DOROTHY ALLISON (b. 1949)

Male and female citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, must be equally admitted to all honors, positions, and public employment according to their capacity and without other distinctions besides those of their virtues and talents.

—OLYMPE DE GOUGES (1748–1793)

Every time we liberate a woman, we liberate a man.

—MARGARET MEAD (1901–1978)

Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development, and building good governance.

—KOFI ANNAN (1938–2018)

Gender consciousness has become involved in almost every intellectual field: history, literature, science, anthropology. There's been an extraordinary advance.

—CLIFFORD GEERTZ (1926–2006)

For a long time, the question of gender appeared to be a simple matter of society's assigning appropriate roles for men and women, thus defining them in terms of their gender. However,

studies in anthropology over the last 150 years have altered our view by demonstrating that gender is largely a variable, cultural invention. Men and women are, these studies tell us, shaped by the environment into which they are born. Their gender expectations may differ widely from what is currently the norm in our culture.

The political unrest of the eighteenth century in the West instigated profound changes in the way people there thought about conventional sex roles. Men like William Godwin (1756–1836) wrote extensively about women’s rights, beginning a movement that continues to this day. Some nineteenth-century plays, such as Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, simply reflected social changes and deep-seated concerns that involved examining gender assumptions. The authors represented here, from philosophers to anthropologists to literary critics, examine the question of gender from a wide range of viewpoints that include various aspects of gender identity across cultures.

Mary Wollstonecraft wrote in a time of extreme political change: when revolution was erupting in the American colonies in 1776 and in France in 1789. Kings and aristocrats were losing their heads, literally. Monarchies were giving way to republics. During this period democracy in its modern form began to grace the lives of some, whereas tyranny oppressed others. Even though radical changes took place in some areas, a conservative backlash in England and elsewhere threatened to heighten oppression rather than expand freedom. Although Wollstonecraft is known today chiefly for her feminist works, she was also deeply engaged in the

radical political thought of the time. For example, her defense of the ideals of the French Revolution in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) brought her work to the attention of other radical thinkers such as William Godwin (whom she later married), Thomas Paine, William Blake, and William Wordsworth.

Still, Wollstonecraft's name remains a keystone in the history of feminism. She went on to write one of the most important books of the late eighteenth century, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), and is remembered most for her careful analysis of a society that did not value the gifts and talents of women. Her complaint is based on a theory of efficiency and economics: it is a waste to limit the opportunities of women. By making her appeal in this fashion she may have expected to gain the attention of the men who held power in late-eighteenth-century England. Some of them did listen. By the 1830s, at the height of the industrial revolution, women were often employed outside the home. However, they were frequently given the most wretched jobs (such as in mining) and were not accorded the kind of respect and opportunity that Wollstonecraft envisioned. They often became drudges in a process of industrial development that demeaned their humanity.

Karen Horney (1885–1952), a contemporary of both Freud and Jung, responded in her work to some of Freud's theories concerning the sexual development of women, one of which was that girls naturally developed penis envy when they realized that they lacked this anatomical feature. After reflecting on the behavior of some tribal cultures, Horney theorized that the boot

was actually on the other foot. She asserted that men are envious of the power of women to create a human life out of their bodies and that, as a result, throughout history, men have ascribed extraordinary powers to female deities.

However, Horney did not necessarily disagree entirely with Freud. As her daughter, Marianne Horney Eckardt, put it: “Her early writing did focus on such topics as penis envy among other issues. Her observations concluded that penis envy and other feminine symptomatology did exist, but were determined by cultural factors rather than libidinal conflicts.” In Dr. Eckardt’s words, then, Horney’s interest in feminine psychology as such centered more on the cultural than on the purely psychiatric.

Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986) was one of the leading postwar intellectuals in France. She was in an open marriage for 50 years with Jean-Paul Sartre, poet, playwright, and, like de Beauvoir, one of the best known French philosophers. Her “If Man and Woman Were Equal” is a plea for changes in society that would make it possible for equality between the sexes to lift women from the inferior position that society has placed them in. She talks about raising girls from the earliest age to compete in sports and be given the awards, honors, and future expectations that boys take for granted. In her writing, she acknowledges that her goals are aspirational, but she feels achieving them is possible. One of her targets is the “Myth of the Feminine,” which she feels almost guarantees the inferiority of women. De Beauvoir’s book *The Second Sex* (1949) became one of the most influential documents of the postwar feminist movement.

The social construction of gender and the processes by which gender is interpreted and understood interest Judith Lorber, a sociologist who studied gender not as a biological distinction but as a social construction. To some extent she looked to Aristotle, whose view was that anatomy is not destiny, but that social status determines the opportunities and outcomes of people's lives. Lorber feels that gender is a cultural institution and that as such it can be modified. She envisions a future when gender will become degendered, leading her to be called a gender deconstructionist. In her work she examines a catalogue of gender descriptions and gender accommodations that affect people across social groups.

The distinguished feminist film critic Molly Haskell has written widely about the portrayal of women in films, both domestic and abroad. Her studies in the Sorbonne in Paris helped her become one of the foremost experts on the New Wave film development, a movement that took a new approach to film realism. While studies of film helped her understand how women are treated in our culture, she was not prepared for her own sibling's decision to express her gender as a transsexual woman. In her essay, she examines her childhood with Chevey, recalling her affection for women's clothes and thinking about the feminine gendered qualities, such as empathy and caring, that were characteristic of her both as a child and adult. Haskell is very direct in asking Chevey about her sexual experiences and her life as a woman. She felt that women had things better in general than men, while Haskell herself always thought that men had things better. They had more power, more opportunities, and more fun. But Chevey did not agree.

Catharine A. MacKinnon addresses the legal issues involved in sexual harassment, behavior that, even more than thirty years after her work was published, some people do not yet recognize as having political consequences. However, just as racial injustice and racially motivated laws have political consequences, so too does sexual harassment. Reviewing the background of harassment and its effect on women, MacKinnon demonstrates that it operated to oppress a class of people, much as Martin Luther King Jr., demonstrated that racial discrimination functioned in the American South. King's concern was with the law — he wrote while imprisoned for a legal offense — as is MacKinnon's. This is because, ultimately, the force of politics in a democracy is felt in the interpretation and implementation of its laws.

Our cultural values regarding gender identification and gender essentialism are currently in flux. Judith Butler (b. 1956) addresses these values in the selection from her book *Undoing Gender* (2004). She examines a young boy's mutilation in infancy that resulted in his being raised as a girl. The problems that this child faced were complicated by other children's ridicule as well as by the constant examination by doctors who were supervising the transgender experiment. Butler's essay is essentially an analysis of the narrative of the boy's experiences. She questions the reliability of the boy's narrative and asks us to examine it in depth to reach an understanding of the boy's true experience. The issues of sexual dimorphism and society's limiting view of gender are among her primary concerns.

Some Considerations about the Nature of Gender

Before reading the selections that follow, consider your views of gender. Reflect on the following questions and write out your responses. Discuss your answers with your classmates.

1. What does the word *gender* mean to you?
2. How many genders do you think there are?
3. What are the approved “official” genders in the United States today?
4. How is gender determined biologically?
5. How is gender determined culturally?
6. How have ideas about gender changed in recent years?
7. How are ideas about gender regarded by our current politicians?
8. To what extent does the idea of gender imply inequality?
9. How do individuals determine their own gender?
10. How do your parents differ in their concept of gender from your conceptions?



Mary Wollstonecraft *Of the Pernicious Effects Which Arise from the Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society*



Hulton Archive/Getty Images

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT (1759–1797) was born into relatively modest circumstances, with a father whose heavy drinking and spending eventually ruined the family and left her and her sisters to support themselves. She became a governess, a teacher, and

eventually a writer. Her views were among the most enlightened of her day, particularly regarding women and women's rights, giving her the reputation of being a very forward-looking feminist, for her time and even for ours. Her thinking, however, is comprehensive and not limited to a single issue.

She was known to the American patriot Thomas Paine (1737–1809), to Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709–1783), and to the English philosopher William Godwin (1756–1836), whom she eventually married. Her views on marriage were remarkable for her time; among other beliefs, she felt it unnecessary to marry a man in order to live happily with him. Her first liaison, with an American, Gilbert Imlay, gave her the opportunity to travel and learn about commerce and capitalism first hand. Her second liaison, with Godwin, brought her into the intellectual circles of her day. She married Godwin when she was pregnant, subsequently dying in childbirth. Her daughter, Mary, married the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley and wrote the novel *Frankenstein* (1818).

The excitement generated by the French Revolution (1789–1799) caused Wollstonecraft to react against the very conservative view put forward by the philosopher Edmund Burke. Her pamphlet *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) was well received. She followed it with *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), which was translated into French.

She saw feminism in political terms. The chapter reprinted here concentrates on questions of property, class, and law. As a person committed to the revolutionary principles of liberty, equality, and

fraternity, Wollstonecraft linked the condition of women to the political and social structure of her society. Her aim was to point out the inequities in the treatment of women — which her society simply did not perceive — and attempt to rectify them.

WOLLSTONECRAFT'S RHETORIC

Mary Wollstonecraft wrote for an audience that did not necessarily appreciate brief, exact expression. Rather, they appreciated a more luxuriant and leisurely style than we use today. As a result, her prose can sometimes seem wordy to a modern audience. However, she handles imagery carefully (especially in the first paragraph) without overburdening her prose. She uses an approach that she calls “episodical observations” ([para. 12](#)). These are anecdotes — personal experiences — and apparently casual catalogings of thoughts on a number of related issues. She was aware that her structure was not tight, that it did not develop a specific argument, and that it did not force the reader to accept or reject her position. She also considered this a wise approach because it was obvious to her that her audience was completely prejudiced against her view. To attempt to convince them of her views directly was to invite total defeat.

Instead, she simply puts forward several observations that stand by themselves as examples of the evils she condemns. Even those who stand against her will see that there is validity to her claims, and they will not be so threatened by her argument as to become defensive before they have learned something new. She appeals always to the higher intellectual capacities of both men

and women, directing her complaints, too, against both men and women. This balance of opinion, coupled with a range of thought-provoking examples, makes her views clear and convincing.

Also distinctive in this passage is the use of metaphor. The second sentence of [paragraph 1](#) is particularly heavy with metaphor: “For it is in the most polished society that noisome reptiles and venomous serpents lurk under the rank herbage; and there is voluptuousness pampered by the still sultry air, which relaxes every good disposition before it ripens into virtue.” The metaphor presents society as a garden in which the grass is decaying and dangerous serpents are lurking. Good disposition — character — is a plant that might ripen, but — continuing the metaphor — it ripens into virtue. A favorite source of metaphors for Wollstonecraft is drapery (dressmaking). When she uses one of these metaphors she is usually reminding the reader that drapery gives a new shape to things, that it sometimes hides the truth, and that it ought not to put a false appearance on what it covers.

Another of her rhetorical techniques is that of literary allusion. By alluding to important literary sources — such as Greek mythology, William Shakespeare, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Samuel Johnson — she not only demonstrates her knowledge but also shows that she respects her audience, which she presumes shares the same knowledge. She does not show off by overquoting or by referring to very obscure writers. She balances her allusions perfectly, even transforming folk aphorisms into

“homely proverbs” such as “whoever the devil finds idle he will employ.”

Wollstonecraft’s experiences with her difficult father gave her knowledge of gambling tables and card games, another source of allusions. She draws further on personal experience — shared by some of her audience — when she talks about the degradation felt by a woman of intelligence forced to act as a governess — a glorified servant — in a well-to-do family. Wollstonecraft makes excellent uses of these allusions, never overdoing them, always giving them just the right touch.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in Mary Wollstonecraft’s “Of the Pernicious Effects Which Arise from the Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society.” Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What are some of the pernicious effects that Wollstonecraft decries?
2. What kinds of work are women fit for, in Wollstonecraft’s view?
3. What happens to people who are born to wealth and have nothing to do?

From Vindication of the Rights of Woman.

Of the Pernicious Effects Which Arise from the Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society

From the respect paid to property flow, as from a poisoned fountain, most of the evils and vices which render this world such a dreary scene to the contemplative mind. For it is in the most polished society that noisome reptiles and venomous serpents lurk under the rank herbage; and there is voluptuousness pampered by the still sultry air, which relaxes every good disposition before it ripens into virtue.

One class presses on another; for all are aiming to procure respect on account of their property: and property, once gained, will procure the respect due only to talents and virtue. Men neglect the duties incumbent on man, yet are treated like demi-gods; religion is also separated from morality by a ceremonial veil, yet men wonder that the world is almost, literally speaking, a den of sharpers or oppressors.

There is a homely proverb, which speaks a shrewd truth, that whoever the devil finds idle he will employ. And what but habitual idleness can hereditary wealth and titles produce? For man is so constituted that he can only attain a proper use of his faculties by exercising them, and will not exercise them unless necessity of some kind first set the wheels in motion. Virtue likewise can only be acquired by the discharge of relative duties; but the importance of these sacred duties will scarcely be felt by the being who is cajoled out of his humanity by the flattery of sycophants.¹ There

must be more equality established in society, or morality will never gain ground, and this virtuous equality will not rest firmly even when founded on a rock, if one half of mankind be chained to its bottom by fate, for they will be continually undermining it through ignorance or pride.

It is vain to expect virtue from women till they are in some degree independent of men; nay, it is vain to expect that strength of natural affection which would make them good wives and mothers.

It is vain to expect virtue from women till they are in some degree independent of men; nay, it is vain to expect that strength of natural affection which would make them good wives and mothers. Whilst they are absolutely dependent on their husbands they will be cunning, mean, and selfish, and the men who can be gratified by the fawning fondness of spaniel-like affection have not much delicacy, for love is not to be bought, in any sense of the words; its silken wings are instantly shrivelled up when anything beside a return in kind is sought. Yet whilst wealth enervates men, and women live, as it were, by their personal charms, how can we expect them to discharge those ennobling duties which equally require exertion and self-denial? Hereditary property sophisticates² the mind, and the unfortunate victims to it, if I may so express myself, swathed from their birth, seldom exert the

locomotive faculty of body or mind; and, thus viewing everything through one medium, and that a false one, they are unable to discern in what true merit and happiness consist. False, indeed, must be the light when the drapery of situation hides the man, and makes him stalk in masquerade, dragging from one scene of dissipation to another the nerveless limbs that hang with stupid listlessness, and rolling round the vacant eye which plainly tells us that there is no mind at home.

I mean, therefore, to infer³ that the society is not properly organized which does not compel men and women to discharge their respective duties, by making it the only way to acquire that countenance from their fellow-creatures which every human being wishes some way to attain. The respect, consequently, which is paid to wealth and mere personal charms, is a true north-east blast that blights the tender blossoms of affection and virtue. Nature has wisely attached affections to duties to sweeten toil, and to give that vigor to the exertions of reason which only the heart can give. But the affection which is put on merely because it is the appropriated insignia of a certain character, when its duties are not fulfilled, is one of the empty compliments which vice and folly are obliged to pay to virtue and the real nature of things.

To illustrate my opinion, I need only observe that when a woman is admired for her beauty, and suffers herself to be so far intoxicated by the admiration she receives as to neglect to discharge the indispensable duty of a mother, she sins against herself by neglecting to cultivate an affection that would equally tend to make her useful and happy. True happiness, I mean all the

contentment and virtuous satisfaction that can be snatched in this imperfect state, must arise from well regulated affections; and an affection includes a duty. Men are not aware of the misery they cause and the vicious weakness they cherish by only inciting women to render themselves pleasing; they do not consider that they thus make natural and artificial duties clash by sacrificing the comfort and respectability of a woman's life to voluptuous notions of beauty when in nature they all harmonize.

Cold would be the heart of a husband, were he not rendered unnatural by early debauchery, who did not feel more delight at seeing his child suckled by its mother, than the most artful wanton tricks could ever raise; yet this natural way of cementing the matrimonial tie and twisting esteem with fonder recollections, wealth leads women to spurn. To preserve their beauty and wear the flowery crown of the day, which gives them a kind of right to reign for a short time over the sex, they neglect to stamp impressions on their husbands' hearts that would be remembered with more tenderness when the snow on the head began to chill the bosom than even their virgin charms. The maternal solicitude of a reasonable affectionate woman is very interesting, and the chastened dignity with which a mother returns the caresses that she and her child receive from a father who has been fulfilling the serious duties of his station, is not only a respectable but a beautiful sight. So singular indeed are my feelings, and I have endeavored not to catch factitious⁴ ones, that after having been fatigued with the sight of insipid grandeur and the slavish ceremonies that with cumbrous pomp supplied the place of domestic affections, I have turned to some other scene to relieve

my eye by resting it on the refreshing green everywhere scattered by nature. I have then viewed with pleasure a woman nursing her children, and discharging the duties of her station with, perhaps, merely a servant maid to take off her hands the servile part of the household business. I have seen her prepare herself and children, with only the luxury of cleanliness, to receive her husband, who returning weary home in the evening found smiling babes and a clean hearth. My heart has loitered in the midst of the group, and has even throbbed with sympathetic emotion, when the scraping of the well known foot has raised a pleasing tumult.

Whilst my benevolence has been gratified by contemplating this artless picture, I have thought that a couple of this description, equally necessary and independent of each other, because each fulfilled the respective duties of their station, possessed all that life could give. Raised sufficiently above abject poverty not to be obliged to weigh the consequence of every farthing they spend, and having sufficient to prevent their attending to a frigid system of economy, which narrows both heart and mind, I declare, so vulgar⁵ are my conceptions, that I know not what is wanted to render this the happiest as well as the most respectable situation in the world, but a taste for literature, to throw a little variety and interest into social converse, and some superfluous money to give to the needy and to buy books. For it is not pleasant when the heart is opened by compassion and the head active in arranging plans of usefulness, to have a prim urchin continually twitching back the elbow to prevent the hand from drawing out an almost empty purse, whispering at the same time some prudential maxim about the priority of justice.

Destructive, however, as riches and inherited honors are to the human character, women are more debased and cramped, if possible, by them than men, because men may still, in some degree, unfold their faculties by becoming soldiers and statesmen.

As soldiers, I grant, they can now only gather, for the most part, vainglorious laurels, whilst they adjust to a hair the European balance, taking especial care that no bleak northern nook or sound incline the beam.⁶ But the days of true heroism are over, when a citizen fought for his country like a Fabricius⁷ or a Washington, and then returned to his farm to let his virtuous fervor run in a more placid, but not a less salutary, stream. No, our British heroes are oftener sent from the gaming table than from the plough⁸ and their passions have been rather inflamed by hanging with dumb suspense on the turn of a die, than sublimated by panting after the adventurous march of virtue in the historic page.

The statesman, it is true, might with more propriety quit the faro bank, or card table, to guide the helm, for he has still but to shuffle and trick.⁹ The whole system of British politics, if system it may courteously be called, consisting in multiplying dependents and contriving taxes which grind the poor to pamper the rich; thus a war, or any wild goose chase, is, as the vulgar use the phrase, a lucky turn-up of patronage for the minister, whose chief merit is the art of keeping himself in place. It is not necessary then that he should have bowels for¹⁰ the poor, so he can secure for his family the odd trick. Or should some show of respect, for what is termed with ignorant ostentation an Englishman's birthright, be expedient

to bubble the gruff mastiff¹¹ that he has to lead by the nose, he can make an empty show very safely by giving his single voice and suffering his light squadron to file off to the other side. And when a question of humanity is agitated he may dip a sop in the milk of human kindness to silence Cerberus,¹² and talk of the interest which his heart takes in an attempt to make the earth no longer cry for vengeance as it sucks in its children's blood, though his cold hand may at the very moment rivet their chains by sanctioning the abominable traffic. A minister is no longer a minister than while he can carry a point which he is determined to carry. Yet it is not necessary that a minister should feel like a man, when a bold push might shake his seat.

But, to have done with these episodic observations, let me return to the more specious slavery which chains the very soul of woman, keeping her forever under the bondage of ignorance.

The preposterous distinctions of rank, which render civilization a curse by dividing the world between voluptuous tyrants and cunning envious dependents, corrupt, almost equally, every class of people, because respectability is not attached to the discharge of the relative duties of life, but to the station, and when the duties are not fulfilled the affections cannot gain sufficient strength to fortify the virtue of which they are the natural reward. Still there are some loopholes out of which a man may creep, and dare to think and act for himself; but for a woman it is a herculean task, because she has difficulties peculiar to her sex to overcome which require almost superhuman powers.

A truly benevolent legislator always endeavors to make it the interest of each individual to be virtuous; and thus private virtue becoming the cement of public happiness, an orderly whole is consolidated by the tendency of all the parts towards a common center. But, the private or public virtue of woman is very problematical; for Rousseau, and a numerous list of male writers, insist that she should all her life be subjected to a severe restraint, that of propriety. Why subject her to propriety — blind propriety, if she be capable of acting from a nobler spring, if she be an heir of immortality? Is sugar always to be produced by vital blood? Is one half of the human species, like the poor African slaves, to be subject to prejudices that brutalize them, when principles would be a surer guard, only to sweeten the cup of man? Is not this indirectly to deny woman reason? For a gift is a mockery, if it be unfit for use.

Women are, in common with men, rendered weak and luxurious by the relaxing pleasures which wealth procures; but added to this they are made slaves to their persons, and must render them alluring that man may lend them his reason to guide their tottering steps aright. Or should they be ambitious, they must govern their tyrants by sinister tricks, for without rights there cannot be any incumbent duties. The laws respecting woman, which I mean to discuss in a future part, make an absurd unit of a man and his wife,¹³ and then, by the easy transition of only considering him as responsible, she is reduced to a mere cypher.¹⁴

The being who discharges the duties of its station is independent; and, speaking of women at large, their first duty is to themselves

as rational creatures, and the next in point of importance, as citizens, is that which includes so many, of a mother. The rank in life which dispenses with their fulfilling this duty necessarily degrades them by making them mere dolls. Or, should they turn to something more important than merely fitting drapery upon a smooth block, their minds are only occupied by some soft platonic attachment; or, the actual management of an intrigue may keep their thoughts in motion; for when they neglect domestic duties, they have it not in their own power to take the field and march and counter-march like soldiers, or wrangle in the senate to keep their faculties from rusting.

I know that, as a proof of the inferiority of the sex, Rousseau has exultingly exclaimed, How can they leave the nursery for the camp!¹⁵ And the camp has by some moralists been termed the school of the most heroic virtues; though, I think, it would puzzle a keen casuist¹⁶ to prove the reasonableness of the greater number of wars that have dubbed heroes. I do not mean to consider this question critically; because, having frequently viewed these freaks of ambition as the first natural mode of civilization, when the ground must be torn up, and the woods cleared by fire and sword, I do not choose to call them pests; but surely the present system of war has little connection with virtue of any denomination, being rather the school of *finesse* and effeminacy than of fortitude.

Yet if defensive war, the only justifiable war, in the present advanced state of society, where virtue can show its face and ripen amidst the rigors which purify the air on the mountain's top, were alone to be adopted as just and glorious, the true heroism of

antiquity might again animate female bosoms. But fair and softly, gentle reader, male or female, do not alarm thyself, for though I have compared the character of a modern soldier with that of a civilized woman, I am not going to advise them to turn their distaff¹⁷ into a musket, though I sincerely wish to see the bayonet converted into a pruning-hook. I only recreated an imagination, fatigued by contemplating the vices and follies which all proceed from a feculent¹⁸ stream of wealth that has muddied the pure rills of natural affection, by supposing that society will some time or other be so constituted, that man must necessarily fulfill the duties of a citizen or be despised, and that while he was employed in any of the departments of civil life, his wife, also an active citizen, should be equally intent to manage her family, educate her children, and assist her neighbors.

But, to render her really virtuous and useful, she must not, if she discharge her civil duties, want, individually, the protection of civil laws; she must not be dependent on her husband's bounty for her subsistence during his life or support after his death — for how can a being be generous who has nothing of its own? or virtuous, who is not free?

The wife, in the present state of things, who is faithful to her husband, and neither suckles nor educates her children, scarcely deserves the name of a wife, and has no right to that of a citizen. But take away natural rights, and duties become null.

Women then must be considered as only the wanton solace of men when they become so weak in mind and body that they

cannot exert themselves, unless to pursue some frothy pleasure or to invent some frivolous fashion. What can be a more melancholy sight to a thinking mind than to look into the numerous carriages that drive helter-skelter about this metropolis in a morning full of pale-faced creatures who are flying from themselves. I have often wished, with Dr. Johnson,¹⁹ to place some of them in a little shop with half a dozen children looking up to their languid countenances for support. I am much mistaken if some latent vigor would not soon give health and spirit to their eyes, and some lines drawn by the exercise of reason on the blank cheeks, which before were only undulated by dimples, might restore lost dignity to the character, or rather enable it to attain the true dignity of its nature. Virtue is not to be acquired even by speculation, much less by the negative supineness that wealth naturally generates.

Besides, when poverty is more disgraceful than even vice, is not morality cut to the quick? Still to avoid misconstruction, though I consider that women in the common walks of life are called to fulfill the duties of wives and mothers, by religion and reason, I cannot help lamenting that women of a superior cast have not a road open by which they can pursue more extensive plans of usefulness and independence. I may excite laughter by dropping a hint which I mean to pursue some future time, for I really think that women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed without having any direct share allowed them in the deliberations of government.

But, as the whole system of representation is now in this country only a convenient handle for despotism, they need not complain, for they are as well represented as a numerous class of hard-working mechanics, who pay for the support of royalty when they can scarcely stop their children's mouths with bread. How are they represented whose very sweat supports the splendid stud of an heir apparent, or varnishes the chariot of some female favorite who looks down on shame? Taxes on the very necessaries of life enable an endless tribe of idle princes and princesses to pass with stupid pomp before a gaping crowd, who almost worship the very parade which costs them so dear. This is mere gothic grandeur, something like the barbarous useless parade of having sentinels on horseback at Whitehall,²⁰ which I could never view without a mixture of contempt and indignation.

How strangely must the mind be sophisticated when this sort of state impresses it! But, till these monuments of folly are levelled by virtue, similar follies will leaven the whole mass. For the same character, in some degree, will prevail in the aggregate of society; and the refinements of luxury, or the vicious repinings,²¹ of envious poverty, will equally banish virtue from society, considered as the characteristic of that society, or only allow it to appear as one of the stripes of the harlequin coat worn by the civilized man.

In the superior ranks of life every duty is done by deputies, as if duties could ever be waived, and the vain pleasures which consequent idleness forces the rich to pursue appear so enticing to the next rank that the numerous scramblers for wealth sacrifice everything to tread on their heels. The most sacred trusts are then

considered as sinecures,²² because they were procured by interest, and only sought to enable a man to keep *good company*. Women, in particular, all want to be ladies. Which is simply to have nothing to do, but listlessly to go they scarcely care where, for they cannot tell what.

But what have women to do in society? I may be asked, but to loiter with easy grace; surely you would not condemn them all to suckle fools and chronicle small beer!²³ No. Women might certainly study the art of healing, and be physicians as well as nurses. And midwifery, decency seems to allot to them, though I am afraid the word midwife in our dictionaries will soon give place to *accoucheur*,²⁴ and one proof of the former delicacy of the sex be effaced from the language.

They might also study politics, and settle their benevolence on the broadest basis; for the reading of history will scarcely be more useful than the perusal of romances, if read as mere biography; if the character of the times, the political improvements, arts, &c., be not observed. In short, if it be not considered as the history of man; and not of particular men, who filled a niche in the temple of fame, and dropped into the black rolling stream of time, that silently sweeps all before it, into the shapeless void called — eternity. For shape, can it be called, “that shape hath none”?²⁵

The few employments open to women, so far from being liberal, are menial

Business of various kinds they might likewise pursue, if they were educated in a more orderly manner, which might save many from common and legal prostitution. Women would not then marry for a support, as men accept of places under government, and neglect the implied duties; nor would an attempt to earn their own subsistence — a most laudable one! — sink them almost to the level of those poor abandoned creatures who live by prostitution. For are not milliners and mantua-makers²⁶ reckoned the next class? The few employments open to women, so far from being liberal, are menial; and when a superior education enables them to take charge of the education of children as governesses, they are not treated like the tutors of sons, though even clerical tutors are not always treated in a manner calculated to render them respectable in the eyes of their pupils, to say nothing of the private comfort of the individual. But as women educated like gentlewomen are never designed for the humiliating situation which necessity sometimes forces them to fill, these situations are considered in the light of a degradation; and they know little of the human heart, who need to be told that nothing so painfully sharpens sensibility as such a fall in life.

Some of these women might be restrained from marrying by a proper spirit or delicacy, and others may not have had it in their power to escape in this pitiful way from servitude; is not that government then very defective, and very unmindful of the happiness of one half of its members, that does not provide for honest, independent women, by encouraging them to fill respectable stations? But in order to render their private virtue a public benefit, they must have a civil existence in the state,

married or single; else we shall continually see some worthy woman, whose sensibility has been rendered painfully acute by undeserved contempt, droop like “the lily broken down by a plowshare.”

It is a melancholy truth — yet such is the blessed effect of civilization! — the most respectable women are the most oppressed; and, unless they have understandings far superior to the common run of understandings, taking in both sexes, they must, from being treated like contemptible beings, become contemptible. How many women thus waste life away the prey of discontent, who might have practiced as physicians, regulated a farm, managed a shop, and stood erect, supported by their own industry, instead of hanging their heads surcharged with the dew of sensibility, that consumes the beauty to which it at first gave lustre; nay, I doubt whether pity and love are so near akin as poets feign, for I have seldom seen much compassion excited by the helplessness of females, unless they were fair; then, perhaps pity was the soft handmaid of love, or the harbinger of lust.

How much more respectable is the woman who earns her own bread by fulfilling any duty, than the most accomplished beauty! — beauty did I say? — so sensible am I of the beauty of moral loveliness, or the harmonious propriety that attunes the passions of a well regulated mind, that I blush at making the comparison; yet I sigh to think how few women aim at attaining this respectability by withdrawing from the giddy whirl of pleasure, or the indolent calm that stupefies the good sort of women it sucks in.

Proud of their weakness, however, they must always be protected, guarded from care, and all the rough toils that dignify the mind. If this be the fiat of fate, if they will make themselves insignificant and contemptible, sweetly to waste “life away,” let them not expect to be valued when their beauty fades, for it is the fate of the fairest flowers to be admired and pulled to pieces by the careless hand that plucked them. In how many ways do I wish, from the purest benevolence, to impress this truth on my sex; yet I fear that they will not listen to a truth that dear-bought experience has brought home to many an agitated bosom, nor willingly resign the privileges of rank and sex for the privileges of humanity, to which those have no claim who do not discharge its duties.

Those writers are particularly useful, in my opinion, who make man feel for man, independent of the station he fills, or the drapery of factitious sentiments. I then would fain²⁷ convince reasonable men of the importance of some of my remarks; and prevail on them to weigh dispassionately the whole tenor of my observations. I appeal to their understandings; and, as a fellow-creature, claim, in the name of my sex, some interest in their hearts. I entreat them to assist to emancipate their companion, to make her a *help meet*²⁸ for them!

Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers — in a word, better citizens. We should then love them with true affection, because we should learn to respect ourselves; and, the peace of mind of a worthy

man would not be interrupted by the idle vanity of his wife, nor the babes sent to nestle in a strange bosom, having never found a home in their mother's.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. Who is the audience for Wollstonecraft's writing? Is she writing more for men than for women? Is it clear from what she says that she addresses an explicit audience with specific qualities?
2. Analyze [paragraph 1](#) carefully for the use of imagery, especially metaphor. What are the effects of these images? Are they overdone?
3. Wollstonecraft begins by attacking property, or the respect paid to it. What does she mean? Does she sustain that line of thought throughout the piece?
4. In [paragraph 12](#), Wollstonecraft speaks of the "bondage of ignorance" in which women are held. Clarify what she means by that expression.
5. In [paragraph 30](#), Wollstonecraft says that people who are treated as if they were contemptible will become contemptible. Is this a political or a psychological judgment?
6. What is the substance of Wollstonecraft's complaint concerning the admiration of women for their beauty?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Throughout the piece Wollstonecraft attacks the unnatural distinctions made between men and women. Establish carefully what those unnatural distinctions are, why they are unnatural, and whether such distinctions persist to the present day. By contrast, establish what some natural distinctions between men and women are and whether Wollstonecraft has taken them into consideration.

2. References are made throughout the piece to prostitution and the debaucheries of men. [Paragraph 7](#) specifically refers to the “wanton tricks” of prostitutes. What is Wollstonecraft’s attitude toward men in regard to sexuality and their attitudes toward women — both the women of the brothels and the women with whom men live? Find passages in the piece that you can quote and analyze in to examine her views.
3. In [paragraph 2](#), Wollstonecraft complains that “the respect due only to talents and virtue” is instead being given to people on account of their property. Further, she says in [paragraph 9](#) that riches are “destructive ... to the human character.” Determine carefully, by means of reference to and analysis of specific passages, just what Wollstonecraft means by such statements. Then, use your own anecdotes or “episodical observations” to take a stand on whether these are views you can hold for our time. Are riches destructive to character? Is too much respect paid to those who possess property? If possible, use metaphor or allusion — literary or personal.
4. In [paragraph 4](#), Wollstonecraft speaks of “men who can be gratified by the fawning fondness of spaniel-like affection” from their women. Search the essay for other instances of similar views and analyze them carefully. Establish exactly what the men she describes want their women to be like. Have today’s men changed very much in their expectations? Why? Why not? Use personal observations where possible in answering this question.
5. The question of what roles women ought to have in society is addressed in [paragraphs 26](#), [27](#), and [28](#). What are those roles? Why are they defined in terms of work? Do you agree that they are, indeed, the roles that women should assume? Would you include more roles? Do women in our time have greater access to those roles? Consider what women actually did in Wollstonecraft’s time and what they do today.

1. Mary Wollstonecraft wrote more than a century and a half before Karen Horney ("[The Distrust Between the Sexes](#)"). Examine the assumptions each writer makes about the role and nature of each sex in her historical situation. How much has changed since Wollstonecraft wrote her book? How much do these writers agree about the positions of power of men and women in their society? How much of what each writer describes about the relationship between men and women do you observe in your own environment?
2. Compare Wollstonecraft's views on the ways in which women are victims of prejudice with the views of Martin Luther King Jr. ("[Letter From Birmingham Jail](#)"). How much do women of Wollstonecraft's time have in common with the conditions of African Americans as described by King? What political issues are central to the efforts of both groups to achieve justice and equal opportunity? Might Wollstonecraft see herself in the same kind of struggle as King, or would she draw sharp distinctions?



Karen Horney *The Distrust between the Sexes*



Bettmann/Getty Images

KAREN HORNEY (1885–1952) was a distinguished psychiatrist who developed her career somewhat independently of the influence of Sigmund Freud. In her native Germany, she taught in the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute from the end of World War I until 1932, a year before Hitler came to power. She was

influenced by Freud's work — as was every other psychoanalyst — but she found that although brilliant, it did not satisfactorily explain important issues in female sexuality.

In Germany, Horney's early research centered on questions about female psychology. This selection, first published in German in 1931, is part of these early studies. Horney's conclusion was that penis envy, like many other psychological issues in women, was determined by cultural factors and that these issues were not purely psychological or libidinal in origin. She thought Freud oversimplified female sexuality and that the truth, demonstrated through her own analysis, was vastly different. She began a significant theoretical shift that saw neurosis as a product of both psychological and cultural conflicts rather than of psychological stress alone.

In 1932, Horney emigrated to America, where she began writing a distinguished series of publications on neurosis. Her career in Chicago was remarkable. Not only did she found the American Institute for Psychoanalysis (1941) and the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, but she also wrote such important books as *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (1937), *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (1939), and *Self-Analysis* (1942). Her work was rooted in cultural studies, and one of her principal arguments was that neuroses, including sexual problems, are caused by cultural influences and pressures that the individual simply cannot deal with. Sigmund Freud thought the reverse, placing the causal force of neuroses in sexuality.

Her studies constantly brought her back to the question of interpersonal relations, and she saw neurotic patterns developed in childhood as the main cause of many failed relationships. The selection focuses particularly on the relationship that individuals establish with their mother or their father. Her insistence that childhood patterns affect adult behavior is consistent with Freudianism; however, her interpretations of those patterns are somewhat different. Like Carl Jung, she looks toward anthropological studies of tribal behavior for help in interpreting the behavior of modern people.

Horney claims that the distrust between the sexes cannot be explained away as existing only in individuals but is a widespread phenomenon that arises out of psychological forces present in men and women. She discusses a number of cultural practices in primitive peoples in an effort to suggest that even without modern cultural trappings, the two sexes suffer anxieties in their relationships. She also looks at the individual in a family setting, showing that normal expectations of child–parent relations can sometimes be frustrated, with harmful results.

In addition, she examines the nature of culture, reminding us that early societies were often matriarchal — that is, centered not on men and their activities but on women. Her views about matriarchy, that the mystery of a woman is connected to her biologically creative nature, are quite suggestive in psychological terms. The envy as she sees it is on the part of men, who compensate for their inability to create life by spending their energies creating “state, religion, art, and science” ([para. 14](#)).

Horney speaks directly about sexual matters and about what she sees as male anxieties. She holds that there are distinct areas of conflict between men and women and that they are psychological in origin.

HORNEY'S RHETORIC

This is an expository essay, establishing the truth of its hypothesis by pointing to a range of evidence from a variety of sources.

Horney's view is that the distrust between the sexes is the result of cultural forces of which the individual is only dimly aware. In this sense she aligns herself with the Freudians, who constantly point to influences on the individual that are subconscious in nature and, therefore, not part of the individual's self-awareness.

To some degree her essay is itself an analysis of the relationship between men and women, with a look back at the history of culture. Her technique — a review of older societies — establishes that the current nature of the relationship between men and women is colored by the fact that most modern societies are dominated by patriarchal institutions. In ancient times, however, societies may well have been matriarchal.

This selection was originally delivered as a lecture to the German Women's Medical Association in November 1930, and most of the audience members were women. Consequently, the nature of the imagery, the frankness of the discourse, and the cultural focus concern issues that would have a distinct impact on women. On reading this essay, it becomes clear that Horney is speaking with

a particular directness that she might have modified for a mixed audience.

Her method of writing is analytical, as she says several times. She is searching for causes within the culture as well as within the individual. Her range of causal analysis includes the comparative study of cultures (ethnology) as well as personal psychology. Her capacity to call on earlier writers and cultures reveals her enormous scope of knowledge and also helps convince the reader of the seriousness of her inquiry.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Karen Horney's "The Distrust between the Sexes." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. How can a woman's attitude toward men be influenced by childhood conflicts?
2. How do patriarchal traditions affect men's attitudes toward women?

From *Feminine Psychology*. Translated by Harold Kelman.

The Distrust between the Sexes

As I begin to talk to you today about some problems in the relationship between the sexes, I must ask you not to be disappointed. I will not concern myself primarily with the aspect of the problem that is most important to the physician. Only at the end will I briefly deal with the question of therapy. I am far more concerned with pointing out to you several psychological reasons for the distrust between the sexes.

The relationship between men and women is quite similar to that between children and parents, in that we prefer to focus on the positive aspects of these relationships. We prefer to assume that love is the fundamentally given factor and that hostility is an accidental and avoidable occurrence. Although we are familiar with slogans such as “the battle of the sexes” and “hostility between the sexes,” we must admit that they do not mean a great deal. They make us overfocus on sexual relations between men and women, which can very easily lead us to a too one-sided view. Actually, from our recollection of numerous case histories, we may conclude that love relationships are quite easily destroyed by overt or covert hostility. On the other hand we are only too ready to blame such difficulties on individual misfortune, on incompatibility of the partners, and on social or economic causes.

The individual factors, which we find causing poor relations between men and women, may be the pertinent ones. However, because of the great frequency, or better, the regular occurrence

of disturbances in love relations, we have to ask ourselves whether the disturbances in the individual cases might not arise from a common background; whether there are common denominators for this easily and frequently arising suspiciousness between the sexes?

It is almost impossible to attempt within the framework of a brief lecture to give you a complete survey of so large a field. I therefore will not even mention such factors as the origin and effects of such social institutions as marriage. I merely intend to select at random some of the factors that are psychologically understandable and pertain to the causes and effects of the hostility and tension between the sexes.

I would like to start with something very commonplace — namely, that a good deal of this atmosphere of suspiciousness is understandable and even justifiable. It apparently has nothing to do with the individual partner, but rather with the intensity of the affect¹ and with the difficulty of taming them.

We know or may dimly sense, that these affects can lead to ecstasy, to being beside oneself, to surrendering oneself, which means a leap into the unlimited and the boundless. This is perhaps why real passion is so rare. For like a good businessman, we are loath to put all our eggs in one basket. We are inclined to be reserved and ever ready to retreat. Be that as it may, because of our instinct for self preservation, we all have a natural fear of losing ourselves in another person. That is why what happens to love, happens to education and psychoanalysis; everybody thinks

he knows all about them, but few do. One is inclined to overlook how little one gives of one-self, but one feels all the more this same deficiency in the partner, the feeling of “You never really loved me.” A wife who harbors suicidal thoughts because her husband does not give her all his love, time, and interest, will not notice how much of her own hostility, hidden vindictiveness, and aggression are expressed through her attitude. She will feel only despair because of her abundant “love,” while at the same time she will feel most intensely and see most clearly the lack of love in her partner. Even Strindberg² [who was a misogynist] defensively managed to say on occasion that he was no woman hater, but that women hated and tortured him.

Here we are not dealing with pathological phenomena at all. In pathological cases we merely see a distortion and exaggeration of a general and normal occurrence. Anybody, to a certain extent, will be inclined to overlook his own hostile impulses, but under pressure of his own guilty conscience, may project them onto the partner. This process must, of necessity, cause some overt or covert distrust of the partner’s love, fidelity, sincerity, or kindness. This is the reason why I prefer to speak of distrust between the sexes and not of hatred; for in keeping with our own experience we are more familiar with the feeling of distrust.

A further, almost unavoidable, source of disappointment and distrust in our normal love life derives from the fact that the very intensity of our feelings of love stirs up all of our secret expectations and longings for happiness, which slumber deep inside us. All our unconscious wishes, contradictory in their nature

and expanding boundlessly on all sides, are waiting here for their fulfillment. The partner is supposed to be strong, and at the same time helpless, to dominate us and be dominated by us, to be ascetic and to be sensuous. He should rape us and be tender, have time for us exclusively and also be intensely involved in creative work. As long as we assume that he could actually fulfill all these expectations, we invest him with the glitter of sexual overestimation. We take the magnitude of such overvaluation for the measure of our love, while in reality it merely expresses the magnitude of our expectations. The very nature of our claims makes their fulfillment impossible. Herein lies the origin of the disappointments with which we may cope in a more or less effective way. Under favorable circumstances we do not even have to become aware of the great number of our disappointments, just as we have not been aware of the extent of our secret expectations. Yet there remain traces of distrust in us, as in a child who discovers that his father cannot get him the stars from the sky after all.

Thus far, our reflections certainly have been neither new nor specifically analytical and have often been better formulated in the past. The analytical approach begins with the question: What special factors in human development lead to the discrepancy between expectations and fulfillment and what causes them to be of special significance in particular cases? Let us start with a general consideration. There is a basic difference between human and animal development — namely, the long period of the infant's helplessness and dependency. The paradise of childhood is most often an illusion with which adults like to deceive themselves. For

the child, however, this paradise is inhabited by too many dangerous monsters. Unpleasant experiences with the opposite sex seem to be unavoidable. We need only recall the capacity that children possess, even in their very early years, for passionate and instinctive sexual desires similar to those of adults and yet different from them. Children are different in the aims of their drives, but above all, in the pristine integrity of their demands. They find it hard to express their desires directly, and where they do, they are not taken seriously. Their seriousness sometimes is looked upon as being cute, or it may be overlooked or rejected. In short, children will undergo painful and humiliating experiences of being rebuffed, being betrayed, and being told lies. They also may have to take second place to a parent or a sibling, and they are threatened and intimidated when they seek, in playing with their own bodies, those pleasures that are denied them by adults. The child is relatively powerless in the face of all this. He is not able to ventilate his fury at all, or only to a minor degree, nor can he come to grips with the experience by means of intellectual comprehension. Thus, anger and aggression are pent up within him in the form of extravagant fantasies, which hardly reach the daylight of awareness, fantasies that are criminal when viewed from the standpoint of the adult, fantasies that range from taking by force and stealing, to those about killing, burning, cutting to pieces, and choking. Since the child is vaguely aware of these destructive forces within him, he feels, according to the talion law,³ equally threatened by the adults. Here is the origin of those infantile anxieties of which no child remains entirely free. This already enables us to understand better the fear of love of which I have spoke before. Just here, in this most irrational of all areas,

the old childhood fears of a threatening father or mother are reawakened, putting us instinctively on the defensive. In other words, the fear of love will always be mixed with the fear of what we might do to the other person, or what the other person might do to us. A lover in the Aru Islands,⁴ for example, will never make a gift of a lock of hair to his beloved, because should an argument arise, the beloved might burn it, thus causing the partner to get sick.

I would like to sketch briefly how childhood conflicts may affect the relationship to the opposite sex in later life. Let us take as an example a typical situation: The little girl who was badly hurt through some great disappointment by her father, will transform her innate instinctual wish to receive from the man, into a vindictive one of taking from him by force. Thus the foundation is laid for a direct line of development to a later attitude, according to which she will not only deny her maternal instincts, but will have only one drive, i.e., to harm the male, to exploit him, and to suck him dry. She has become a vampire. Let us assume that there is a similar transformation from the wish to receive to the wish to take away. Let us further assume that the latter wish was repressed due to anxiety from a guilty conscience; then we have here the fundamental constellation for the formation of a certain type of woman who is unable to relate to the male because she fears that every male will suspect her of wanting something from him. This really means that she is afraid that he might guess her repressed desires. Or by completely projecting onto him her repressed wishes, she will imagine that every male merely intends to exploit her, that he wants from her only sexual satisfaction, after which he

will discard her. Or let us assume that a reaction formation of excessive modesty will mask the repressed drive for power. We then have the type of woman who shies away from demanding or accepting anything from her husband. Such a woman, however, due to the return of the repressed, will react with depression to the nonfulfillment of her unexpressed, and often unformulated, wishes. She thus unwittingly jumps from the frying pan into the fire, as does her partner, because a depression will hit him much harder than direct aggression. Quite often the repression of aggression against the male drains all her vital energy. The woman then feels helpless to meet life. She will shift the entire responsibility for her helplessness onto the man, robbing him of the very breath of life. Here you have the type of woman who, under the guise of being helpless and childlike, dominates her man.

These are examples that demonstrate how the fundamental attitude of women toward men can be disturbed by childhood conflicts. In an attempt to simplify matters, I have stressed only one point, which, however, seems crucial to me — the disturbance in the development of motherhood.

I shall now proceed to trace certain traits of male psychology. I do not wish to follow individual lines of development, though it might be very instructive to observe analytically how, for instance, even men who consciously have a very positive relationship with women and hold them in high esteem as human beings, harbor deep within themselves a secret distrust of them; and how this distrust relates back to feelings toward their mothers, which they

experienced in their formative years. I shall focus rather on certain typical attitudes of men toward women and how they have appeared during various eras of history and in different cultures, not only as regards sexual relationships with women, but also, and often more so, in nonsexual situations, such as in their general evaluation of women.

Man's fear of woman is deeply rooted in sex, as is shown by the simple fact that it is only the sexually attractive woman of whom he is afraid and who, although he strongly desires her, has to be kept in bondage.

I shall select some random examples, starting with Adam and Eve. Jewish culture, as recorded in the Old Testament, is outspokenly patriarchal. This fact reflects itself in their religion, which has no maternal goddesses; in their morals and customs, which allow the husband the right to dissolve the marital bond simply by dismissing his wife. Only by being aware of this background can we recognize the male bias in two incidents of Adam's and Eve's history. First of all, woman's capacity to give birth is partly denied and partly devaluated: Eve was made of Adam's rib and a curse was put on her to bear children in sorrow. In the second place, by interpreting her tempting Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge as a sexual temptation, woman appears as the sexual temptress, who plunges man into misery. I believe that

these two elements, one born out of resentment, the other out of anxiety, have damaged the relationship between the sexes from the earliest times to the present. Let us follow this up briefly. Man's fear of woman is deeply rooted in sex, as is shown by the simple fact that it is only the sexually attractive woman of whom he is afraid and who, although he strongly desires her, has to be kept in bondage. Old women, on the other hand, are held in high esteem, even by cultures in which the young woman is dreaded and therefore suppressed. In some primitive cultures the old woman may have the decisive voice in the affairs of the tribe; among Asian nations also she enjoys great power and prestige. On the other hand, in primitive tribes woman is surrounded by taboos during the entire period of her sexual maturity. Women of the Arunta tribe are able to magically influence the male genitals. If they sing to a blade of grass and then point it at a man or throw it at him, he becomes ill or loses his genitals altogether. Women lure him to his doom. In a certain East African tribe, husband and wife do not sleep together, because her breath might weaken him. If a woman of a South African tribe climbs over the leg of a sleeping man, he will be unable to run; hence the general rule of sexual abstinence two to five days prior to hunting, warfare, or fishing. Even greater is the fear of menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth. Menstruating women are surrounded by extensive taboos — a man who touches a menstruating woman will die. There is one basic thought at the bottom of all this: woman is a mysterious being who communicates with spirits and thus has magic powers that she can use to hurt the male. He must therefore protect himself against her powers by keeping her subjugated. Thus the Miri in Bengal do not permit their women to

eat the flesh of the tiger, lest they become too strong. The Watawela of East Africa keep the art of making fire a secret from their women, lest women become their rulers. The Indians of California have ceremonies to keep their women in submission; a man is disguised as a devil to intimidate the women. The Arabs of Mecca exclude women from religious festivities to prevent familiarity between women and their overlords. We find similar customs during the Middle Ages — the Cult of the Virgin⁵ side by side with the burning of witches; the adoration of “pure” motherliness, completely divested of sexuality, next to the cruel destruction of the sexually seductive woman. Here again is the implication of underlying anxiety, for the witch is in communication with the devil. Nowadays, with our more humane forms of aggression, we burn women only figuratively, sometimes with undisguised hatred, sometimes with apparent friendliness. In any case “The Jew must burn.”⁶ In friendly and secret autos-da-fé,⁷ many nice things are said about women, but it is just unfortunate that in her God-given natural state, she is not the equal of the male. Mobius⁸ pointed out that the female brain weighs less than the male one, but the point need not be made in so crude a way. On the contrary, it can be stressed that woman is not at all inferior, only different, but that unfortunately she has fewer or none of those human or cultural qualities that man holds in such high esteem. She is said to be deeply rooted in the personal and emotional spheres, which is wonderful; but unfortunately, this makes her incapable of exercising justice and objectivity, therefore disqualifying her for positions in law and government and in the spiritual community. She is said to be at home only in the realm of eros. Spiritual matters are alien to her innermost being, and she is

at odds with cultural trends. She therefore is, as Asians frankly state, a second-rate being. Woman may be industrious and useful but is, alas, incapable of productive and independent work. She is, indeed, prevented from real accomplishment by the deplorable, bloody tragedies of menstruation and childbirth. And so every man silently thanks his God, just as the pious Jew does in his prayers, that he was not created a woman.

Man's attitude toward motherhood is a large and complicated chapter. One is generally inclined to see no problem in this area. Even the misogynist is obviously willing to respect woman as a mother and to venerate her motherliness under certain conditions, as mentioned above regarding the Cult of the Virgin. In order to obtain a clearer picture, we have to distinguish between two attitudes: men's attitudes toward motherliness, as represented in its purest form in the Cult of the Virgin, and their attitude toward motherhood as such, as we encounter it in the symbolism of the ancient mother goddesses. Males will always be in favor of motherliness, as expressed in certain spiritual qualities of women, i.e., the nurturing, selfless, self-sacrificing mother; for she is the ideal embodiment of the woman who could fulfill all his expectations and longings. In the ancient mother goddesses, man did not venerate motherliness in the spiritual sense, but rather motherhood in its most elemental meaning. Mother goddesses are earthy goddesses, fertile like the soil. They bring forth new life and they nurture it. It was this life-creating power of woman, an elemental force, that filled man with admiration. And this is exactly the point where problems arise. For it is contrary to human nature to sustain appreciation without resentment toward capabilities that

one does not possess. Thus, a man's minute share in creating new life became, for him, an immense incitement to create something new on his part. He has created values of which he might well be proud. State, religion, art, and science are essentially his creations, and our entire culture bears the masculine imprint.

However, as happens elsewhere, so it does here; even the greatest satisfactions or achievements, if born out of sublimation, cannot fully make up for something for which we are not endowed by nature. Thus there has remained an obvious residue of general resentment of men against women. This resentment expresses itself, also in our times, in men's distrustful defensive maneuvers against the threat of women's invasion of their domains; hence their tendency to devalue pregnancy and childbirth and to overemphasize male generality. This attitude does not express itself in scientific theories alone, but is also of far-reaching consequence for the entire relationship between the sexes, and for sexual morality in general. Motherhood, especially illegitimate motherhood, is very insufficiently protected by laws — with the one exception of a recent attempt at improvement in Russia. Conversely, there is ample opportunity for the fulfillment of the male's sexual needs. Emphasis on irresponsible sexual indulgence, and devaluation of women to an object of purely physical needs, are further consequences of this masculine attitude.

From Bachofen's⁹ investigations we know that this state of the cultural supremacy of the male has not existed since the

beginning of time, but that women once occupied a central position. This was the era of the so-called matriarchy, when law and custom were centered around the mother. Matricide was then, as Sophocles¹⁰ showed in the *Eumenides*, the unforgivable crime, while patricide, by comparison, was a minor offense. Only in recorded historical times have men begun, with minor variations, to play the leading role in the political, economical, and judicial fields, as well as in the area of sexual morality. At present we seem to be going through a period of struggle in which women once more dare to fight for their equality. This is a phase, the duration of which we are not yet able to survey.

I do not want to be misunderstood as having implied that all disaster results from male supremacy and that relations between the sexes would improve if women were given the ascendancy. However, we must ask ourselves why there should have to be any power struggle at all between the sexes. At any given time, the more powerful side will create an ideology suitable to help maintain its position and to make this position acceptable to the weaker one. In this ideology the differentness of the weaker one will be interpreted as inferiority, and it will be proven that these differences are unchangeable, basic, or God's will. It is the function of such an ideology to deny or conceal the existence of a struggle. Here is one of the answers to the question raised initially as to why we have so little awareness of the fact that there is a struggle between the sexes. It is in the interest of men to obscure this fact; and the emphasis they place on their ideologies has caused women, also, to adopt these theories. Our attempt at resolving these rationalizations and at examining these ideologies

as to their fundamental driving forces, is merely a step on the road taken by Freud.¹¹

I believe that my exposition shows more clearly the origin of resentment than the origin of dread, and I therefore want to discuss briefly the latter problem. We have seen that the male's dread of the female is directed against her as a sexual being. How is this to be understood? The clearest aspect of this dread is revealed by the Arunta tribe. They believe that the woman has the power to magically influence the male genital. This is what we mean by castration anxiety in analysis. It is an anxiety of psychogenic origin that goes back to feelings of guilt and old childhood fears. Its anatomical-psychological nucleus lies in the fact that during intercourse the male has to entrust his genitals to the female body, that he presents her with his semen and interprets this as a surrender of vital strength to the woman, similar to his experiencing the subsiding of erection after intercourse as evidence of having been weakened by the woman. Although the following idea has not been thoroughly worked through yet, it is highly probable, according to analytical and ethnological data, that the relationship to the mother is more strongly and directly associated with the fear of death than the relationship to the father. We have learned to understand the longing for death as the longing for reunion with the mother. In African fairy tales it is a woman who brings death into the world. The great mother goddesses also brought death and destruction. It is as though we were possessed by the idea that the one who gives life is also capable of taking it away. There is a third aspect of the male's dread of the female that is more difficult to

understand and to prove, but that can be demonstrated by observing certain recurrent phenomena in the animal world. We can see that the male is quite frequently equipped with certain specific stimulants for attracting the female, or with specific devices for seizing her during sexual union. Such arrangements would be incomprehensible if the female animal possessed equally urgent or abundant sexual needs as does the male. As a matter of fact, we see that the female rejects the male unconditionally, after fertilization has occurred. Although examples taken from the animal world may be applied to human beings only with the greatest of caution, it is permissible, in this context, to raise the following question: Is it possible that the male is sexually dependent on the female to a higher degree than the woman is on him, because in women part of the sexual energy is linked to generative processes? Could it be that men, therefore, have a vital interest in keeping women dependent on them? So much for the factors that seem to be at the root of the great power struggle between men and women, insofar as they are of a psychogenic nature and related to the male.

That many-faceted thing called love succeeds in building bridges from the loneliness on this shore to the loneliness on the other one. These bridges can be of great beauty, but they are rarely built for eternity and frequently they cannot tolerate too heavy a burden without collapsing. Here is the other answer to the question posed initially of why we see love between the sexes more distinctly than we see hate — because the union of the sexes offers us the greatest possibilities for happiness. We therefore are naturally inclined to overlook how powerful are the

destructive forces that continually work to destroy our chances for happiness.

We might ask in conclusion, how can analytical insights contribute to diminish the distrust between the sexes? There is no uniform answer to this problem. The fear of the power of the affects and the difficulty in controlling them in a love relationship, the resulting conflict between surrender and self-preservation, between the I and the Thou¹² is an entirely comprehensible, unmitigatable, and as it were, normal phenomenon. The same thing applies in essence to our readiness for distrust, which stems from unresolved childhood conflicts. These childhood conflicts, however, can vary greatly in intensity, and will leave behind traces of variable depth. Analysis not only can help in individual cases to improve the relationship with the opposite sex, but it can also attempt to improve the psychological conditions of childhood and forestall excessive conflicts. This, of course, is our hope for the future. In the momentous struggle for power, analysis can fulfill an important function by uncovering the real motives of this struggle. This uncovering will not eliminate the motives, but it may help to create a better chance for fighting the struggle on its own ground instead of relegating it to peripheral issues.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. Do you agree that there is hostility between the sexes? What evidence can you cite?
2. What are some of the most important childhood experiences that can affect adult behavior toward the opposite sex?

3. This selection was originally a lecture delivered in Germany in 1930. To what extent are its concerns no longer relevant? To what extent are they still relevant?
4. Do you think this essay could promote better relations between men and women?
5. What kinds of expectations do women seem to have of men, and vice versa? Do these expectations contribute to hostility in specific ways? Consider Horney's description of expectations in [paragraph 8](#).
6. How do the examples of behavior in primitive cultures contribute to an understanding of the relationship between the sexes in our culture?
7. Is Horney pessimistic or optimistic about relationships between the sexes?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. In [paragraph 9](#), Horney says that “unpleasant experiences with the opposite sex seem to be unavoidable.” In your experience, is this true? What unpleasant experiences have you had with the opposite sex? What unpleasant experiences have you observed?
2. Horney mentions that the intensity of our feelings can stir up secret longings for, and expectations of, the opposite sex ([para. 8](#)). What kinds of secret expectations do you feel each sex might have about the other in a relationship? Why would such expectations remain secret? Does such secrecy contribute to problems? Does it contribute to hostility?
3. Deep in the essay, in [paragraph 14](#), Horney mentions envy as contributing to the hostility between the sexes. She says, “For it is contrary to human nature to sustain appreciation without resentment toward capabilities that one does not possess.” Do you agree with her? Do you think envy may have something to do with the hostility between the sexes? Examine your own experience to see whether you recall instances of envy on your part toward a member of the opposite sex (or vice versa).

4. At one point, Horney says, “Man’s fear of woman is deeply rooted in sex” ([para. 13](#)). Do you think this is true? Is woman’s fear of man similarly rooted? Examine this question by comparing two men’s magazines and two women’s magazines to determine what they reveal about the psychology of men and women. Compare their use of social media and their visual material, particularly photographs of members of the opposite sex. Also compare the fiction, and look for signs of a specifically male or female form of fantasy. Compare the advertising to identify the interests of men and women — and try to relate these to psychological concerns.
5. Horney is very direct in her discussion of male dominance in society, not only saying that it exists but asking, “Could it be that men, therefore, have a vital interest in keeping women dependent on them?” ([para. 18](#)). Conduct an interview with one man and one woman. Find out whether they have the same or different feelings about this question. Ask them if they see an effort on the part of men to keep women dependent, and then ask them what form any such dependency takes. Do they agree? Where do you stand on this issue?
6. At one point, Horney discusses how different men are from women. Write an essay in which you show the extent to which women are different from men. If possible, sample others’ opinions and see if they note important differences. To what extent would differences between men and women contribute to hostility?
7. What are the most important psychic phenomena in Horney’s discussion? Her concerns are primarily cultural, but she also describes a psychological situation that has its root in mental experience. What are the most important mental experiences, and how do they manifest themselves in the mental life of individuals?

CONNECTIONS

1. Jung discusses the personal and collective unconscious (“[The Personal and the Collective Unconscious](#)”). Horney’s argument is that there are personal and cultural aspects to the development of the

minds of men and women. How close is Horney to Jung's position regarding what is personal and what is cultural in gender distinction? Does Jung's or Freud's work with dreams clarify the distinctions?

2. One of Molly Haskell's questions for her sibling in "[Who Has It Better, Men or Women?](#)" has to do with the differences between Chevey's experiences pre and post gender transition. Which of Horney's concerns seems to arise in Haskell's narration of her relationship with her sibling? Does Haskell echo the most important of Horney's observations? If Horney could interview Chevey, what would her most significant questions be? Given Horney's concerns, what would you most like to question Chevey about?



Simone De Beauvoir *If Man and Woman Were Equal*



Hulton Deutsch/Corbis Historical/Getty Images

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR (1908–1986) was one of the most important post–World War II French intellectuals. Her work was primarily philosophical, and she taught philosophy and had a long relationship with one of France’s preeminent existentialist philosophers, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980). These two

independent and brilliant leftist thinkers represented the ideal couple to many intellectuals, although recent biographical studies have demonstrated that in their relationship de Beauvoir's ambitions were often subjugated to those of Sartre.

De Beauvoir prepared for a career as a teacher at the Ecole Normale Supérieure and taught in Marseilles, Rouen, and Paris, all the while writing novels, memoirs, and essays. Her best-known book is *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949), published in English in 1953 as *The Second Sex*, a book regarded as a beacon for the modern feminist movement. When de Beauvoir began work on this book, French women were not permitted to vote (they did not win full suffrage until 1945). In *The Second Sex* de Beauvoir discusses how women are cast as the Other, the alienated of society. She explores the implications of defining women in relation to men — as *what men are not* rather than as *what women are*, as a category in and of themselves.

According to de Beauvoir, a person is not born a woman but makes herself a woman. This suggestion implies, for de Beauvoir, that the individual is shaped and formed by social convention, especially by conventions associated with gender. Certain conventions maintain a social fiction that pleases the “ruling caste,” which in de Beauvoir's view is exclusively male. She compares the myth of the Eternal Feminine with a Platonic idea. For Plato, the reality of the world is inferior to the pure ideas that exist in heaven. These ideas are fixed and unaltered by experience. In that sense, de Beauvoir regards the myth of the

Eternal Feminine as an idea that does not change, even in the face of human experience that contradicts it.

Part of the idea of the Eternal Feminine involves the myth that women are mysterious and incomprehensible to men; they are completely unlike men and, therefore, the Other. De Beauvoir believes that no amount of personal experience seems to shatter the myth of women's mystery. She also states that mysteriousness does not serve women well, nor does it serve men; its final result is to keep women inferior to men. Yet, the concept of mystery lingers. She explains that in the relationship of master to slave, it is always the slave who is mysterious and difficult to understand. The slave is always the Other. Through this logic de Beauvoir says that as long as the mystery of woman defines her, woman will always be in a subordinate relationship to men.

One important consequence of accepting the myth of woman is that men will fail to understand women as they are — as friends, as equals. Even worse, women who accept the myth will constantly distort their personalities in order to please the “master.” De Beauvoir asks, which is it that a woman loves: her husband or her marriage?

Women who accept the myth will manipulate men for their own purposes by trading on that myth, but in the process they lose their individual nature, surrendering it to some imagined “immanence.” By the term *immanence*, de Beauvoir usually means an imagined essential quality, associated here with a myth.

The problem is that what she calls the “mythical form” of women makes women inferior: “It cannot be denied that feminine dependence, inferiority, and misfortune give women their unique character” ([para. 7](#)). De Beauvoir prefers reality to myth: a recognition of equal status, which she knows will not happen immediately.

DE BEAUVOIR’S RHETORIC

This essay makes a plea for equality between men and women on several levels. As society was structured, de Beauvoir knew, the concept of equality was impossible. The social order, she tells us, is essentially patriarchal. As a result, women have a subordinate and restricted role that is maintained in part by the persistence of the Myth of the Feminine. Therefore, the general structure of the essay is as an argument decrying the persistence of the myth and revealing the damage that it does to members of society, both men and women.

At the time she wrote this piece, de Beauvoir was not known as a feminist. Indeed, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, few modern feminists were known in the United States or in France. Long before de Beauvoir aligned herself with certain militant feminists in the 1970s, *The Second Sex* provided a rallying cry because it was a treatise that examined with great authority the representation of women in many different intellectual and cultural arenas. For that reason, the book became a memorable document of great political power. Its rhetoric is not patterned or self-conscious but

straightforward. The calm, reasonable, direct style enforces the author's persuasiveness.

De Beauvoir strikes at a given in the social order of mid-twentieth-century Europe and America. She generally talks about women who are in a comfortable social class, women whom bell hooks would refer to as bourgeois and privileged. Nonetheless, de Beauvoir maintains that as long as women are seen as mysterious and different in a male-dominated world, they will remain subordinate. The myths associated with women may be several, contradictory, and seemingly harmless, but de Beauvoir insists they are ultimately damaging to women and to the relationship between the sexes.

When she says “a world in which men and women are equal,” she refers to the Soviet Union, which promised equality and which, at the time she wrote, seemed to be making progress in that direction. De Beauvoir, as a leftist, was hopeful. But in [paragraph 2](#) she admits that such a program will fall short: “is it enough to change laws, institutions, customs, public opinions” for women “to really become peers?” Further, there is the fear that when women shed the myth of femininity they may become monsters. She disregards this idea by pointing to the fact that the idea of woman is a fabrication of civilization itself, not necessarily, as some say, a result of nature. Nothing, she says, in “the human collectivity” is wholly natural.

One marker of de Beauvoir's rhetoric is her use of very large paragraphs that often seem to have no thesis statement —

instead the thesis is an overriding claim for equality of the sexes and therefore buried in the paragraph. However, some paragraphs end with a declaration that prepares the way for the next paragraph. For example, [paragraph 2](#) ends with, “But if we suppose, by contrast, a society where sexual equality is concretely realized, this equality would newly assert itself in each individual.” [Paragraph 3](#) then develops the idea of beginning from the earliest age with girls held to the same standards as boys in sports, studies, and the promise of the “same future.” In the process de Beauvoir pokes at Freud’s theories of psychology that imply inequality, as in his Oedipus complex and penis envy, which she thinks produce inferiority and superiority complexes.

De Beauvoir, in imagining a childhood that would produce equality of the sexes, addresses sexual behavior directly. She recognizes current sexual taboos as inhibiting and goes on to explain that it is essential to recognize sexual curiosity in children, both girls and boys. She complains that “the conditions in which woman’s sexual education and initiation take place today are so deplorable” ([para. 3](#)) that there can be no reason not to demand changes that recognize the reality of sexual desire. In [paragraph 4](#) de Beauvoir begins a brief exploration of the feelings women have toward sex, including the anxiety of “referring back to a tradition of slavery.” When she discusses the idea that women are dominated by their hormones she counters with the fact that men also are dominated by their own hormones. The result is that each sex lives with their own feelings generated by their bodies, but each sex can accommodate the other equally.

De Beauvoir says that the fact of being human is more important than the things that seem to imply differences. But establishing an inferior caste forces that caste to remain inferior, so it is essential to begin by breaking that pattern by providing freedom of thought and action on the part of all. By attempting to provide economic and social equality it would be possible to achieve what she calls “an inner metamorphosis” ([para. 5](#)).

In [paragraph 6](#) de Beauvoir discusses the fear that sexual equality will take the spice out of life. For her this is not likely, but she also points to the fact that there will be change between the sexes and the past will be past — but the future, she says, will be better. She gives the examples of the loss of the plantation glory when slavery was ended in the South, the loss of the castrati singers when eunuchs were no longer castrated as youth, two pleasures that are gone and which now seem deservedly abolished. Among those to be abolished de Beauvoir assigns the myth of feminine charm, which she implies is “paid for with blood or misery.” The future will “not mean that love, happiness, poetry and dreams will be banished from it” ([para. 7](#)). She ends by wishing that the “human couple will discover its true form.”

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Simone de Beauvoir’s “If Man and Woman Were Equal.” Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What changes may be needed to make men and women equal?
2. How does the Myth of the Feminine make men and women unequal?

3. Why does de Beauvoir focus on girls and boys?

If Man And Woman Were Equal

A world where men and women would be equal is easy to imagine because it is exactly the one the Soviet revolution *promised*: women raised and educated exactly like men would work under the same conditions and for the same salaries;¹ erotic freedom would be accepted by custom, but the sexual act would no longer be considered a remunerate “service”; women would be *obliged* to provide another livelihood for themselves; marriage would be based on a free engagement that the spouses could break when they wanted to; motherhood would be freely chosen — that is, birth control and abortion would be allowed — and in return all mothers and their children would be given the same rights; maternity leave would be paid for by the society that would have responsibility for the children, which does not mean that they would be *taken* from their parents but that they would not be *abandoned* to them.

*Woman is defined neither by her hormones
nor by mysterious instincts but by the way
she grasps, through foreign
consciousnesses, her body and her relation
to the world*

But is it enough to change laws, institutions, customs, public opinion, and the whole social context for men and women to really become peers? “Women will always be women,” say the skeptics; other seers prophesy that in shedding their femininity, they will not succeed in changing into men and will become monsters. This would mean that today’s woman is nature’s creation; it must be repeated again that within the human collectivity nothing is natural, and woman, among others, is a product developed by civilization; the intervention of others in her destiny is originary: if this process were driven in another way, it would produce a very different result. Woman is defined neither by her hormones nor by mysterious instincts but by the way she grasps, through foreign consciousnesses, her body and her relation to the world; the abyss that separates adolescent girls from adolescent boys was purposely dug out from early infancy; later, it would be impossible to keep woman from being what she *was made*, and she will always trail this past behind her; if the weight of this past is accurately measured, it is obvious that her destiny is not fixed in eternity. One must certainly not think that modifying her economic situation is enough to transform woman: this factor has been and remains the primordial factor of her development, but until it brings about the moral, social, and cultural consequences it heralds and requires, the new woman cannot appear; as of now, these consequences have been realized nowhere: in the U.S.S.R. no more than in France or the United States; and this is why today’s woman is torn between the past and the present; most often, she appears as a “real woman” disguised as a man, and she feels as awkward in her woman’s body as in her masculine garb. She has to shed her old skin and cut her own clothes. She will only be able

to do this if there is a collective change. No one teacher can today shape a “female human being” that would be an exact homologue to the “male human being”: if raised like a boy, the young girl feels she is an exception, and that subjects her to a new kind of specification. Stendhal² understood this, saying: “The forest must be planted all at once.” But if we suppose, by contrast, a society where sexual equality is concretely realized, this equality would newly assert itself in each individual.

If, from the earliest age, the little girl were raised with the same demands and honors, the same severity and freedom, as her brothers, taking part in the same studies and games, promised the same future, surrounded by women and men who are unambiguously equal to her, the meanings of the “castration complex” and the “Oedipus complex” would be profoundly modified. The mother would enjoy the same lasting prestige as the father if she assumed equal material and moral responsibility for the couple; the child would feel an androgynous³ world around her and not a masculine world; were she more affectively attracted to her father — which is not even certain — her love for him would be nuanced by a will to emulate him and not a feeling of weakness: she would not turn to passivity; if she were allowed to prove her worth in work and sports, actively rivaling boys, the absence of a penis — compensated for by the promise of a child — would not suffice to cause an “inferiority complex”; correlatively, the boy would not have a natural “superiority complex” if it were not instilled in him and if he held women in the same esteem as men.⁴ The little girl would not seek sterile compensations in narcissism and dreams, she would not take herself as given, she

would be interested in what she does, she would throw herself into her pursuits. I have said how much easier puberty would be if she surpassed it, like the boy, toward a free adult future; menstruation horrifies her only because it signifies a brutal descent into femininity; she would also assume her youthful eroticism more peacefully if she did not feel a frightening disgust for the rest of her destiny; a coherent sexual education would greatly help her to surmount this crisis. And thanks to coeducation, the august mystery of Man would have no occasion to arise: it would be killed by everyday familiarity and open competition. Objections to this system always imply respect for sexual taboos; but it is useless to try to inhibit curiosity and pleasure in children; this only results in creating repression, obsessions, and neuroses; exalted sentimentality, homosexual fervor, and the platonic passions of adolescent girls along with the whole procession of nonsense and dissipation are far more harmful than a few childish games and actual experiences. What would really be profitable for the young girl is that, not seeking in the male a demigod — but only a pal, a friend, a partner — she not be diverted from assuming her own existence; eroticism and love would be a free surpassing and not a resignation; she could experience them in a relationship of equal to equal. Of course, there is no question of writing off all the difficulties a child must overcome to become an adult; the most intelligent, tolerant education could not free her from having her own experiences at her own expense; what one would want is that obstacles should not accumulate gratuitously on her path. It is already an improvement that “depraved” little girls are no longer cauterized with red-hot irons; psychoanalysis has enlightened parents

somewhat; yet the conditions in which woman's sexual education and initiation take place today are so deplorable that none of the objections to the idea of a radical change are valid. It is not a question of abolishing the contingencies and miseries of the human condition in her but of giving her the means to go beyond them.

Woman is the victim of no mysterious fate; the singularities that make her different derive their importance from the meaning applied to them; they can be overcome as soon as they are grasped from new perspectives; we have seen that in her erotic experience, the woman feels — and often detests — male domination: it must not be concluded that her ovaries condemn her to living on her knees eternally. Virile aggressiveness is a lordly privilege only within a system where everything conspires to affirm masculine sovereignty; and woman *feels* so deeply passive in the love act only because she already *thinks* herself that way. Many modern women who claim their dignity as human beings still grasp their sexual lives by referring back to a tradition of slavery: so it seems humiliating to them to lie under the man and be penetrated by him, and they tense up into frigidity; but if reality were different, the meaning sexual gestures and postures symbolically express would be different as well: a woman who pays, who dominates her lover, can, for example, feel proud of her superb inertia and think that she is enslaving the male who is actively exerting himself; and today there are already many sexually balanced couples for whom notions of victory and defeat yield to an idea of exchange. In fact, man is, like woman, a flesh, thus a passivity, the plaything of his hormones and the species,

uneasy prey to his desire; and she, like him, in the heart of carnal fever, is consent, voluntary gift, and activity; each of them lives the strange ambiguity of existence made body in his or her own way. In these combats where they believe they are tackling each other, they are fighting their own self, projecting onto their partner the part of themselves they repudiate; instead of living the ambiguity of their condition, each one tries to make the other accept the abjection of this condition and reserves the honor of it for one's self. If, however, both assumed it with lucid modesty, as the correlate of authentic pride, they would recognize each other as peers and live the erotic drama in harmony. The fact of being a human being is infinitely more important than all the singularities that distinguish human beings; it is never the given that confers superiority: "virtue," as the ancients called it, is defined at the level of "what depends on us." The same drama of flesh and spirit, and of finitude and transcendence, plays itself out in both sexes; both are eaten away by time, stalked by death, they have the same essential need of the other; and they can take the same glory from their freedom; if they knew how to savor it, they would no longer be tempted to contend for false privileges; and fraternity could then be born between them.

People will say that all these considerations are merely utopian because to "remake woman," society would have had to have already made her *really* man's equal; conservatives have never missed the chance to denounce this vicious circle in all analogous circumstances: yet history does not go round in circles. Without a doubt, if a caste is maintained in an inferior position, it remains inferior: but freedom can break the circle: let blacks vote and they

become worthy of the vote; give woman responsibilities and she knows how to assume them; the fact is, one would not think of expecting gratuitous generosity from oppressors; but the revolt of the oppressed at times and changes in the privileged caste at other times create new situations; and this is how men, in their own interest, have been led to partially emancipate women: women need only pursue their rise, and the success they obtain encourages them; it seems most certain that they will sooner or later attain perfect economic and social equality, which will bring about an inner metamorphosis.

In any case, some will object that if such a world is possible, it is not desirable. When woman is “the same” as her male, life will lose “its spice.” This argument is not new either: those who have an interest in perpetuating the present always shed tears for the marvelous past about to disappear without casting a smile on the young future. It is true that by doing away with slave markets, we destroyed those great plantations lined with azaleas and camellias, we dismantled the whole delicate Southern civilization; old lace was put away in the attics of time along with the pure timbres of the Sistine castrati, and there is a certain “feminine charm” that risks turning to dust as well. I grant that only a barbarian would not appreciate rare flowers, lace, the crystal clear voice of a eunuch, or feminine charm. When shown in her splendor, the “charming woman” is a far more exalting object than “the idiotic paintings, over-doors, decors, circus backdrops, sideboards or popular illuminations” that maddened Rimbaud;⁵ adorned with the most modern of artifices, worked on with the newest techniques, she comes from the remotest ages, from

Thebes, Minos, Chichén Itzá; and she is also the totem planted in the heart of the African jungle; she is a helicopter and she is a bird; and here is the greatest wonder: beneath her painted hair, the rustling of leaves becomes a thought and words escape from her breasts. Men reach out their eager hands to the marvel; but as soon as they grasp it, it vanishes; the wife and the mistress speak like everyone else, with their mouths: their words are worth exactly what they are worth; their breasts as well. Does such a fleeting miracle — and one so rare — justify perpetuating a situation that is so damaging for both sexes? The beauty of flowers and women's charms can be appreciated for what they are worth; if these treasures are paid for with blood or misery, one must be willing to sacrifice them.

The fact is that this sacrifice appears particularly heavy to men; few of them really wish in their hearts to see women accomplish themselves; those who scorn woman do not see what they would have to gain, and those who cherish her see too well what they have to lose; and it is true that present-day developments not only threaten feminine charm: in deciding to live for herself, woman will abdicate the functions as double and mediator that provide her with her privileged place within the masculine universe; for the man caught between the silence of nature and the demanding presence of other freedoms, a being who is both his peer and a passive thing appears as a great treasure; he may well perceive his companion in a mythical form, but the experiences of which she is the source or pretext are no less real: and there are hardly more precious, intimate, or urgent ones; it cannot be denied that feminine dependence, inferiority, and misfortune give women their

unique character; assuredly, women's autonomy, even if it spares men a good number of problems, will also deny them many conveniences; assuredly, there are certain ways of living the sexual adventure that will be lost in the world of tomorrow: but this does not mean that love, happiness, poetry and dreams will be banished from it. Let us beware lest our lack of imagination impoverish the future; the future is only an abstraction for us; each of us secretly laments the absence in it of what was; but tomorrow's humankind will live the future in its flesh and in its freedom; that future will be its present, and humankind will in turn prefer it; new carnal and affective relations of which we cannot conceive will be born between the sexes: friendships, rivalries, complicities, chaste or sexual companionships that past centuries would not have dreamed of are already appearing. For example, nothing seems more questionable to me than a catchphrase that dooms the new world to uniformity and then to boredom. I do not see an absence of boredom in this world of ours nor that freedom has ever created uniformity. First of all, certain differences between man and woman will always exist; her eroticism, and thus her sexual world, possessing a singular form, cannot fail to engender in her a sensuality, a singular sensitivity: her relation to her body, to the male body, and to the child will never be the same as those man has with his body, with the female body, and with the child; those who talk so much about "equality in difference" would be hard put not to grant me that there are differences in equality. Besides, it is institutions that create monotony: young and pretty, slaves of the harem are all the same in the sultan's arms; Christianity gave eroticism its flavor of sin and legend by endowing the human female with a soul; restoring woman's

singular sovereignty will not remove the emotional value from amorous embraces. It is absurd to contend that orgies, vice, ecstasy, and passion would become impossible if man and woman were concretely peers; the contradictions opposing flesh to spirit, instant to time, the vertigo of immanence to the appeal of transcendence, the absolute of pleasure to the nothingness of oblivion will never disappear; tension, suffering, joy, and the failure and triumph of existence will always be materialized in sexuality. To emancipate woman is to refuse to enclose her in the relations she sustains with man, but not to deny them; while she posits herself for herself, she will nonetheless continue to exist for him *as well*: recognizing each other as subject, each will remain an *other* for the other; reciprocity in their relations will not do away with the miracles that the division of human beings into two separate categories engenders: desire, possession, love, dreams, adventure; and the words that move us: “to give,” “to conquer,” and “to unite” will keep their meaning; on the contrary, it is when the slavery of half of humanity is abolished and with it the whole hypocritical system it implies that the “division” of humanity will reveal its authentic meaning and the human couple will discover its true form.

“The direct, natural, and necessary relation of person to person is the *relation of man to woman*,” said Marx.⁶ From the character of this relationship follows how much man as *a species-being*, as man, has come to be himself and to comprehend himself; the relation of man to woman is the most natural relation of human being to human being. It therefore reveals the extent to which man’s *natural* behavior has become *human*, or the extent to which

the *human* essence in him has become a *natural* essence — the extent to which his *human nature* has come to be *natural* to him.

This could not be better said. Within the given world, it is up to man to make the reign of freedom triumph; to carry off this supreme victory, men and women must, among other things and beyond their natural differentiations, unequivocally affirm their brotherhood.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What were the Soviet Union's promises of equality?
2. How does de Beauvoir critique the Myth of the Feminine?
3. Why is a collective change necessary?
4. What is the fear implied if women become like men?
5. What changes does de Beauvoir recommend for achieving equality?
6. What is the role of sports in achieving equality?
7. What does de Beauvoir mean by equality?

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. De Beauvoir wrote her book in the 1940s when the world was very different than it is today. To what extent do you see progress being made to achieve equality between men and women? Be specific in choosing areas that you can point to that validate the hopes and wishes of de Beauvoir. Would she see progress in the areas that she describes in the first paragraph of her essay? She saw the promise of the Soviet Union but also recognized that it did not live up to its promise. Have capitalist countries made the kind of progress that the Communists had hoped for?

2. The Myth of Femininity is a central concern for de Beauvoir in this essay and in much of her work. She sees it as destructive of any hopes for equality because the Myth of Femininity points to women's inferiority. It promotes male superiority in part because it emphasizes differences rather than similarities. Take a stand on whether or not you agree with de Beauvoir. Then examine our culture to see whether or not there is evidence for an increase in our culture's promotion of the Myth of the Feminine. Refer to news, advertising, film, and television. Be sure to define the Myth of the Feminine.
3. De Beauvoir's essay makes reference to a system that conspires to affirm masculine superiority. Examine your immediate world and argue a case that either confirms that your world is promoting male superiority or that it is not. What evidence can you bring to bear on this issue? What do your immediate friends say when you ask them if your culture is promoting male superiority? What examples can you find in everyday life that demonstrate that male superiority is evident or desirable?
4. Choose a movie that you enjoyed and examine it for its portrayal of women. Does this film give evidence of the myth of male superiority and female inferiority? Does the film evidence the myth of femininity? Describe the sources of power in the film — which originate with men, which with women? What seem to be the normal assumptions about the equality or lack of it between the sexes? Does this film make progress toward the equality of the sexes, or does it just pretend to? Why has this film been successful, or why has it not?
5. The complaint that de Beauvoir's recommendation for equality of the sexes are quite utopian is still current today. Do you feel that sexual equality is utopian and therefore either impossible or unlikely? De Beauvoir recommends fundamental changes that she sees as necessary to counter such a view. Do you agree with her? She talks about nature and human nature. What can you argue that would support the view that equality is utopian? What can you argue that would show equality is ultimately possible?

■ ■ CONNECTIONS

1. De Beauvoir talks about economic and social changes that could make the sexes equal. Read Barbara Ehrenreich's essay, "[Is the Middle Class Doomed?](#)" and examine her view of the role of women in our culture. What does Ehrenreich tell us that will help a critic of de Beauvoir better understand her concerns for equality? How would de Beauvoir react to what Ehrenreich says about women's work in the United States and its implications for achieving equality between men and women? How might we achieve economic independence for women?
2. Compare what de Beauvoir says in her essay on equality with what Karen Horney ("[Distrust Between the Sexes](#)") says about the distrust between the sexes. Which of these writers seems to be describing the world you live in? Which of these writers is more idealistic in her approach to sexual relations? Which writer seems to you to portray the world you would like to live in? What might Karen Horney say to de Beauvoir regarding the possibility of achieving equality of men and women?



Judith Lorber *Paradoxes of Gender*

JUDITH LORBER (b. 1931) is Professor Emerita at Brooklyn College and the City University of New York. She is a sociologist who specializes in gender studies and is considered one of the leaders in her field. Not only has she written widely about the differences in opportunities that are associated with gender distinctions and assignments, but she has gone so far as to meditate on the utopian possibilities of a culture with no gender distinctions. Like many feminists and specialists in gender studies, Lorber has argued that gender is determined far less by biology than by cultural practices and social constructions. Because she has taught in a number of universities in the United States and abroad, her work has influenced more than a generation of sociologists at an international level.

In her *Gender and Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics* (5th ed., 2012) Lorber gathers a number of ranking feminists to shed light on the current circumstances in gender studies. She talks about many kinds of feminism, gender reform, gender resistance, and gender rebellion, opening discussions on various reactions to feminist theories abroad and suggesting methods of resistance against societies where gender inequality means that men are assumed to be superior and women inferior in politics, sports, and education. Lorber also offers insight into the earliest feminists and follows the growth of feminist politics and theories.

The Social Construction of Gender (1991), co-edited with Susan Farrell, has been widely used in classrooms, covering a variety of

issues associated with the perception of gender. It examines the ways in which society begins in the earliest years to impose gender expectations in children and young people. The book includes articles that reveal the varieties of gender development in families, as well as a section that discusses how gender presumptions take shape in workplaces. Lorber is interested in how gender functions when it comes to assignments in the work force and how gender affects the opportunities available in politics, law, religion, medicine, and technology. The computer is a case in point. When it first became available in the workplace it was assumed to be an extension of the typewriter, and therefore women were usually assigned to work with them. Most men, in the early years, did not know how to use a keyboard. But when it became clear that the computer was a source of power, men were put in command of the more complex and interesting work that the computer made possible, pushing women out of roles they had previously filled.

Breaking the Bowls: Degendering and Feminist Change (2005) addresses the problems feminists have in our culture, which is essentially locked into the simplistic duality of male and female. Gender distinctions as they are today, Lorber says, always imply inferiority, and for that reason she insists that feminists do what they can to break down gender distinctions, particularly because they cannot avoid being interpreted in terms of superiority and inferiority. Lorber, who has established a worldwide reputation based, in part, on her emphasis on degendering, provides an excellent historical and sociological analysis of what gender thinking creates in our society. Her purpose in this effort is to

convince us that the whole idea of gendering is designed to produce inequality, but that, since gender is a social construct, there is a possibility that it can be deconstructed and reformed.

The selection that follows, “The Paradoxes of Gender,” appears in what many critics have called one of the major works in gender studies, *The Paradoxes of Gender* (1994). Lorber says that she offers a new theory of gender in this book: “gender as a social institution.” Freud said anatomy is destiny, but Aristotle’s view was that one’s social position determined one’s destiny. Lorber examines the indicators of gender in such detail that she offers a possibility that, like many social institutions, the institution of gender can be changed to make genders equal rather than different. Lorber has described herself as a “feminist deconstructionist,” and her analysis of gender bears her out.

LORBER’S RHETORIC

The essay begins with a catalogue of gender issues, beginning with gender statuses, a theme that is continued throughout the essay. The first imperative that Lorber establishes is that gender statuses are dependent on historical development in any society. As a sociologist, Lorber centers her focus on society — both historical and contemporary, local and international — as the conditioning environment for how we understand gender and how we fit into our social environment in terms of gender. The convenience of the rhetorical strategy of cataloging permits her to list the wide range of issues that are involved in gender. Her overriding idea is that gender is a “social institution” because it is

socially constructed. The first group of terms in her catalog concern social issues, such as gender division of labor, gender in the family, gender in sexual situations, and gender imagery, among others. Then she turns to the individual, listing the infant's sex category, the individual's sense of gender, sexual orientation, gendered personality, gender beliefs, and gender display — how we present ourselves to others.

Lorber moves on to discuss what our culture tells us about gender roles, for example that we are supposed to be “consistent and congruent with perceived physiology” ([para. 20](#)). But she goes on to explain that everyone's situation is different because there are many ascribed statuses in our society. We identify not only by gender but by race, ethnicity, religion, and social class as well as by educational level, marital status, wealth, and prestige. Later, in [paragraph 35](#), Lorber says that all these constructed statuses are designed on the basis of establishing inequality. She introduces other authorities to explain that, in terms of gender status, Western society has determined that the male gender is considered superior to the female gender.

In the process of exploring the idea of inequality in gender status, Lorber refers to Freudian theory ([para. 27](#)) that claims boys must derive their masculine identification from their father while essentially distancing themselves from their mother. Then she consults Marx's explanation for the prevailing gender distinction that devalues women ([para. 28](#)). He says that the social order that devalues women is designed to produce a source of cheap labor. In his time women labored in mines and factories for puny wages,

while also maintaining a home. Unionized men who could be replaced by women protect their jobs because they are better paid and more interesting. Limiting the education of women in the West — which has been true until modern times — keeps women from advancing to more demanding jobs, particularly in the technological sectors ([para. 29](#)). In terms of the socially constructed gender assignments, women have not done well.

Lorber then discusses the issues of gender construction from the point of view of the individual. She places emphasis on how we as individuals perceive our own gender status. She is also interested in how we construct our own gender status. She talks about how we internalize the patterns that in our society are considered norms of behavior and how we learn what those patterns are. Our personalities are formed in part by our understanding the social norms and by our picking up cues of behavior even as children. Our individual decisions will be characterized by accepting what we feel is appropriate behavior or by rebelling against the norm. Lorber uses the expression “doing gender” as a way of describing how individuals decide to behave in society.

Lorber’s rhetorical strategy in this essay is similar to the one used when writing a research paper for school. She has a clear thesis: that gender status is a creation of the society. She explains that nature is not always in control of gender, but that “for humans the social is the natural” ([para. 37](#)). Throughout the essay, Lorber introduces the experts she has consulted, both by referring to their work and by using quotations from their work. The strategy is designed to demonstrate that her argument is supported by

literature in her field and that she has consulted the most important authorities in her field.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Judith Lorber's "Paradoxes of Gender." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What is gender status?
2. How does society construct gender status?
3. Why does gender status imply inequality?

Paradoxes of Gender

Components of Gender

By now, it should be clear that gender is not a unitary essence but has many components as a social institution and as an individual status.

As a social institution, gender is composed of:

Gender statuses, the socially recognized genders in a society and the norms and expectations for their enactment behaviorally, gesturally, linguistically, emotionally, and physically. How gender statuses are evaluated depends on historical development in any particular society.

Gendered division of labor, the assignment of productive and domestic work to members of different gender statuses. The work assigned to those of different gender statuses strengthens the society's evaluation of those statuses — the higher the status, the more prestigious and valued the work and the greater its rewards.

Gendered kinship, the family rights and responsibilities for each gender status. Kinship statuses reflect and reinforce the prestige and power differences of the different genders.

Gendered sexual scripts, the normative patterns of sexual desire and sexual behavior, as prescribed for the different gender

statuses. Members of the dominant gender have more sexual prerogatives; members of a subordinate gender may be sexually exploited.

Gendered personalities, the combinations of traits patterned by gender norms of how members of different gender statuses are supposed to feel and behave. Social expectations of others in face-to-face interaction constantly bolster these norms.

Gendered social control, the formal and informal approval and reward of conforming behavior and the stigmatization, social isolation, punishment, and medical treatment of nonconforming behavior.

Gender ideology, the justification of gender statuses, particularly, their differential evaluation. The dominant ideology tends to suppress criticism by making these evaluations seem natural.

Gender imagery, the cultural representations of gender and embodiment of gender in symbolic language and artistic productions that reproduce and legitimate gender statuses. Culture is one of the main supports of the dominant gender ideology.

For an individual gender is composed of:

Sex category to which the infant is assigned at birth based on appearance of genitalia. With prenatal testing and sex-typing

categorization is prenatal. Sex category may be changed later through surgery or reinspection of ambiguous genitalia.

Gender identity, the individual's sense of gendered self as a worker and family member.

Gendered marital and procreative status, fulfillment or nonfulfillment of allowed or disallowed mating, impregnation, childbearing, kinship roles.

Gendered sexual orientation, socially and individually patterned sexual desires, feelings, practices, and identification.

Gendered personality, internalized patterns of socially normative emotions as organized by family structure and parenting.

Gendered processes, the social practices of learning, being taught, picking up cues, enacting behavior already learned to be gender-appropriate (or inappropriate, if rebelling, testing), developing a gender identity, "doing gender" as a member of a gender status in relationships with gendered others, acting deferent or dominant.

Gender beliefs, incorporation of or resistance to gender ideology.

Gender display, presentation of self as a certain kind of gendered person through dress, cosmetics, adornments, and permanent and reversible body markers.

For an individual, all the social components are supposed to be consistent and congruent with perceived physiology. The actual combination of genes and genitalia, prenatal, adolescent, and adult hormonal input, and procreative capacity may or may not be congruous with each other and with sex-category assignment, gender identity, gendered sexual orientation and procreative status, gender display, personality, and work and family roles. At any one time, an individual's identity is combination of the major ascribed statuses of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and social class, and the individual's achieved statuses, such as education level, occupation or profession, marital status, parenthood, prestige, authority, and wealth. The ascribed statuses substantially limit or create opportunities for individual achievements and also diminish or enhance the luster of those achievements.

Gender As Process, Stratification, and Structure

As a social institution, gender is a process of creating distinguishable social statuses for the assignment of rights and responsibilities. As part of a stratification system that ranks these statuses unequally, gender is a major building block in the social structures built on these unequal statuses.

In social interaction throughout their lives, individuals learn what is expected, see what is expected, act and react in

expected ways, and thus simultaneously construct and maintain the gender order

As a *process*, gender creates the social differences that define “woman” and “man.” In social interaction throughout their lives, individuals learn what is expected, see what is expected, act and react in expected ways, and thus simultaneously construct and maintain the gender order: “The very injunction to be a given gender takes place through discursive routes: to be a good mother, to be a heterosexually desirable object, to be a fit worker, in sum, to signify a multiplicity of guarantees in response to a variety of different demands all at once” (J. Butler 1990, 145).¹ Members of a social group neither make up gender as they go along nor exactly replicate in rote fashion what was done before. In almost every encounter, human beings produce gender, behaving in the ways they learned were appropriate for their gender status, or resisting or rebelling against these norms. Resistance and rebellion have altered gender norms, but so far they have rarely eroded the statuses.

Gendered patterns of interaction acquire additional layers of gendered sexuality, parenting, and work behaviors in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Gendered norms and expectations are enforced through informal sanctions of gender-inappropriate behavior by peers and by formal punishment or threat of punishment by those in authority should behavior deviate too far from socially imposed standards for women and men.

Everyday gendered interactions build gender into the family, the work process, and other options and institutions, which in turn reinforce gender expectations for individuals. Because gender is a process, there is room not only for modification and variation by individuals and small groups but also for institutionalized change. (J. W. Scott 1988a, 7).²

As part of a *stratification* system, gender ranks men above women of the same race and class. Women and men could be different but equal. In practice, the process of creating difference depends to a great extent on differential evaluation. As Nancy Jay (1981)³ says: “That which is defined, separated out, isolated from all else is A and pure. Not-A is necessarily impure, a random catchall, to which nothing is external except A and the principle of order that separates it from Not-A” (45). From the individual’s point of view, whichever gender is A, the other is Not-A; gender boundaries tell the individual who is like him or her, and all the rest are unlike. From society’s point of view, however, one gender is usually the touchstone, the normal, the dominant, and the other is different, deviant, and subordinate. In Western society, “man” is A, “woman” is Not-A. (Consider what a society would be like where woman was A and man Not-A.)

The further dichotomization by race and class constructs the gradations of a heterogeneous society’s stratification scheme. Thus, in the United States, white is A, African American is Not-A; middle class is A, working class is Not-A, and “African-American women occupy a position whereby the inferior half of a series of these dichotomies converge” (P. H. Collins 1990, 70).⁴ The

dominant categories are the hegemonic ideals, taken so for granted as the way things should be that white is not ordinarily thought of as a race, middle class as a class, or men as a gender. The characteristics of these categories define the Other as that which lacks the valuable qualities the dominants exhibit.

In a gender-stratified society, what men do is usually valued more highly than what women do because men do it, even when their activities are very similar or the same. In different regions of southern India for example, harvesting rice is men's work, shared work, or women's work: "Wherever a task is done by women it is considered easy, and where it is done by [men] it is considered difficult" (Mencher 1988, 104).⁵ A gathering and hunting society's survival usually depends on the nuts, grubs, and small animals brought in by the women's foraging trips, but when the men's hunt is successful, it is the occasion for a celebration. Conversely, because they are the superior group, white men do not have to do the "dirty work" such as housework; the most inferior group does it, usually poor women of color (Palmer 1989).⁶

Freudian psychoanalytic theory claims that boys must reject their mothers and deny the feminine in themselves in order to become men: "For boys the major goal is the achievement of personal masculine identification with their father and sense of secure masculine self, achieved through superego formation and disparagement of women" (Chodorow 1978, 165).⁷ Masculinity may be the outcome of boys' intrapsychic struggles to separate their identity from that of their mothers, but the proofs of

masculinity are culturally shaped and usually ritualistic and symbolic (Gilmore 1990).⁸

The Marxist feminist explanation for gender inequality is that by demeaning women's abilities and keeping them from learning valuable technological skills, bosses preserve them as a cheap and exploitable reserve army of labor. Unionized men who could be easily replaced by women collude in this process because it allows them to monopolize the better paid, more interesting, and more autonomous jobs: "Two factors emerge as helping men maintain their separation from women and their control of technological occupations. One is the active gendering of jobs and people. The second is the continual creation of sub-divisions in work processes, and levels in work hierarchies, into which men can move in order to keep their distance from women" (Cockburn 1985, 13).⁹

Societies vary in the extent of the inequality in social status of their women and men members, but where there is inequality, the status "woman" (and its attendant behavior and role allocations) is usually held in lesser esteem than the status "man." Since gender is also intertwined with a society's other constructed statuses of differential evaluation — race, religion, occupation, class, country of origin, and so on — men and women members of the favored groups command more power, more prestige, and more property than the members of the disfavored groups. Within many social groups, however, men are advantaged over women. The more economic resources, such as education and job opportunities, are available to a group, the more they tend to be monopolized by

men. In poorer groups that have few resources (such as working-class African Americans in the United States), women and men are more nearly equal, and the women may even outstrip the men in education and occupational status (Almquist 1987).¹⁰

As a *structure*, gender divides work in the home and in economic production, legitimates those in authority, and organizes sexuality and emotional life (Connell 1987, 91–142).¹¹ As primary parents, women significantly influence children’s psychological development and emotional attachments, in the process reproducing gender. Emergent sexuality is shaped by heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, and sadomasochistic patterns that are gendered — different for girls and boys, and for women and men — so that sexual statuses reflect gender statuses.

When gender is a major component of structured inequality, the devalued genders have less power, prestige, and economic rewards than the valued genders. In countries that discourage gender discrimination, many major roles are still gendered; women still do most of the domestic labor and child rearing, even while doing full-time paid work; women and men are segregated on the job and each does work considered “appropriate”; women’s work is usually paid less than men’s work. Men dominate the positions of authority and leadership in government, the military, and the law; cultural productions, religions, and sports reflect men’s interests.

In societies that create the greatest gender difference, such as Saudi Arabia, women are kept out of sight behind walls or veils, have no civil rights, and often create a cultural and emotional world of their own (Bernard 1981).¹²

But even in societies with less rigid gender boundaries, women and men spend much of their time with people of their own gender because of the way work and family are organized. This spatial separation of women and men reinforces gendered differentness, identity, and ways of thinking and behaving (Coser 1986).¹³

Gender inequality — the devaluation of “women” and the social domination of “men” — has social functions and a social history. It is not the result of sex, procreation, physiology, anatomy, hormones, or genetic predispositions. It is produced and maintained by identifiable social processes and built into the general social structure and individual identities deliberately and purposefully. The social order as we know it in Western societies is organized around racial, ethnic, class, and gender inequality. I contend, therefore, that the continuing purpose of gender as a modern social institution is to construct women as a group to be the subordinates of men as a group. The life of everyone placed in the status of “woman” is “night to his day — that has forever been the fantasy. Black to his white. Shut out of his system’s space, she is the repressed that ensures the system’s functioning” (Cixous and Clément [1975] 1986, 67).¹⁴

The Paradox of Human Nature

To say that sex, sexuality, and gender are all socially constructed is not to minimize their social power. These categorical imperatives govern our lives in the most profound and pervasive ways, through the social experiences and social practices of what Dorothy Smith calls the “everyday/everynight world” (1990, 31–57).¹⁵ The paradox of human nature is that it is *always* a manifestation of cultural meanings, social relationships, and power politics; “not biology, but culture, becomes destiny” (J. Butler 1990, 8).¹⁶ Gendered people emerge not from physiology or sexual orientation but from the exigencies of the social order, mostly, from the need for a reliable division of the work of food production and the social (not physical) reproduction of new members. The moral imperatives of religion and cultural representations guard the boundary lines among genders and ensure that what is demanded, what is permitted, and what is tabooed for the people in each gender is well known and followed by most (C. Davies 1982).¹⁷ Political power, control of scarce resources, and, if necessary, violence uphold the gendered social order in the face of resistance and rebellion. Most people, however, voluntarily go along with their society’s prescriptions for those of their gender status, because the norms and expectations get built into their sense of worth and identity as a certain kind of human being, and because they believe their society’s way is the natural way. These beliefs emerge from the imagery that pervades the way we think, the way we see and hear and speak, the way we fantasy, and the way we feel.

There is no core or bedrock human nature below these endlessly looping processes of the social production of sex and gender, self

and other, identity and psyche, each of which is a “complex cultural construction” (J. Butler 1990, 36).¹⁸ *For humans, the social is the natural.* Therefore, “in its feminist senses, gender cannot mean simply the cultural appropriation of biological sexual difference. Sexual difference is itself a fundamental — and scientifically contested — construction. Both ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ are woven of multiple, asymmetrical strands of difference, charged with multifaceted dramatic narratives of domination and struggle” (Haraway 1990, 140).¹⁹

■ ■ ■ QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. Why does Lorber say women reproduce gender?
2. What happens to women in societies with the greatest gender difference?
3. What is the rationale for society’s establishing gender inequalities?
4. What are the social functions of gender inequality?
5. What is the result for countries that have discouraged gender inequality?
6. Why do labor issues have a role in gender status?
7. What are Western gender norms?

■ ■ ■ QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Lorber says that “[t]he moral imperatives of religion and cultural representations” maintain the desired gender behavior in our culture. What kinds of gendered behavior are acceptable to religion in our culture? What kinds of gendered behavior are taboo?

2. In several statements Lorber has suggested that politics have a great deal to do with establishing gender norms. She also says that political authorities will punish those who deviate too far from acceptable norms of behavior. From your point of view, clarify what politicians feel is normal behavior for anyone's gendered status. Then find evidence for politicians taking action against people who veer from what they think is acceptable gender behavior.
3. Writing in 1994, Lorber implies that her concern is mostly with straight male and female gender issues. Since then LGBTQ groups have taken on a major role in attempting to educate us regarding a wider variety of genders. How has your generation responded to the needs of the LGBTQ community? How have your parents responded? How have your local politicians responded? Have some in your community seen LGBTQ people as a threat? What is your position?
4. Write an essay that records your own experience with gender inequality. What have you been told that makes you aware of such inequality? Have you been treated as unequal in terms of your gender? Have you at any time treated someone of a different gender in such a way as to imply inequality? What have you done to overcome an implied or overt act of gender inequality?
5. Lorber says, "Gender inequality — the devaluation of 'women' and the social domination of 'men' — has social functions and a social history" ([para. 35](#)). In a research paper explain what the social history has been, starting in the nineteenth century and focusing on one of the following areas: religion, politics, education, or the family.

CONNECTIONS

1. Explain how Lorber's ideas in this essay have relevance to the work of Simone de Beauvoir in "[If Man and Woman Were Equal](#)" and the work of Barbara Ehrenreich in "[Is the Middle Class Doomed?](#)". What evidence do these authors have to add to Lorber's theories? What gender statuses are apparent in de Beauvoir and Ehrenreich that might stimulate Lorber to go even further than she has gone in this essay?

2. After reading Michael Gazzaniga's essay "[Toward a Universal Ethics](#)" and Philippa Foot's "[Virtues and Vices](#)", write an essay that establishes the ethical and moral issues involved in Lorber's exploration of gender statuses. Is the inequality that Lorber discusses a moral issue? It is an ethical issue? Does our society see moral or ethical issues involved in the construction of gender inequality as it is accepted by most people today? What is your view, and how can you defend it?



Molly Haskell *Who Has It Better, Men or Women?*



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MOLLY HASKELL (b. 1939) is a journalist who specializes in film criticism, but her approach has often been that of a feminist, closely observing the portrayal of women in film both in the United States and abroad. She went to Sweetbriar College for her undergraduate degree but also studied in London and in the

Sorbonne in Paris. She became an expert on French film during the 1950s and 1960s when the *Nouvelle Vague*, the New Wave, of highly influential French films and film makers used a new powerful style and range of techniques to transform postwar film. Major figures like Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, Éric Rohmer, and Agnès Varda abandoned the prevailing mode of historical dramas and lavish sets. Instead, they took portable cameras outside and affected a documentary style that defined a new form of realism. Some of their great films were *Hiroshima, mon amour*, *Last Year at Marienbad*, and *Jules and Jim*. All portray complex women and complex relationships. Commenting on one of Truffaut's films, Haskell observed, "Adultery and marriage go together like a horse and carriage."

In her 1974 book *Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in Movies*, Haskell condemns the way women are treated in American films. She looks back on couples in earlier films, such as Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall in *To Have and Have Not* (1944) and Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn in *Pat and Mike* (1952) as having been responsive to one another. Of course, those couples in the films were also couples in life, which may have had something to do with her judgement. But for contemporary films in 1974 she complained that women were portrayed mostly as whores, sex-starved spinsters, psychotics, and emotional cripples. Moreover, they were often raped by the very men they eventually paired off with. This searing critique of contemporary Hollywood earned Haskell a reputation for being a powerful feminist critic.

In a *New York Times* essay, *The Battle of the Sexes* (1982), Haskell complained about the brutes showing up in current films, such as *Raging Bull* with Robert DeNiro, and tried to work out the appeal, which she could see was not only in the films, but in life too. She reflected on her own personal experience as a young woman when she dated a college boy who could turn suddenly from a normal person to a raging, frightening, and aggressive figure. After a while, she said, “Then one day it dawned on me that he wasn’t crazy in love with me, he was just crazy.” This experience made her think that many battered wives mistook brutal behavior for passion, leading her to conclude that this is why they often stayed in such relationships.

Haskell’s more recent book of essays on films, *Holding My Own in No Man’s Land: Men and Women and Film and Feminism* (1997), begins with a discussion of great actresses such as Marlene Dietrich, Gloria Swanson, Doris Day, Meryl Streep, and Lucille Ball. When speaking of the French actress Jeanne Moreau, she says that “the femme fatale is almost invariably a male-invented creation, the projection—and prisoner—of a director or writer’s fears and fantasies, and probably a means of satisfying his own self-destructive urges.” But one of the centerpieces of the book comes during her discussion of male actors, such as John Wayne, in her essay, “Rape: The 2000-Year-Old Misunderstanding,” which not only reviews rape in movies but examines the significance of rape depending on the point of view of men or women. In this essay Haskell’s anger at the exploitation of women surfaces and conflicts with her love of movies.

The book from which the selection below comes, *My Brother My Sister* (2013), deals with issues related to women and men, but it is not informed as much by films as by life. It is a discussion of her sibling's decision to transform her gender.

HASKELL'S RHETORIC

Because Haskell has been a working journalist, her style is approachable and marked by clear direction in her prose. She is unusual in that her paragraphs are often only one sentence long, while her longer paragraphs develop a clear issue. Because this essay is not an argument—it does not directly defend an answer to the question which is its title—it resembles an exploration more than a definitive conclusion. But its overriding concern is a review of the literature and history of sex and sexuality from the points of view of men and then of women.

All this examination results from Haskell's reflections on her younger sibling, who was transsexual. Chevey (born John Cheves Haskell) was interested in girls' clothing from an early age, Haskell tells us, and talks about the fact that from an early age she had an attraction for both boys and girls. She felt that she was bisexual, but without knowing at the time what that meant.

Haskell adopts a strategy here of calling up literary examples as a way of exploring sexual dimorphism and the question of sexual pleasure, which was also a concern of ancient Greeks and Romans. Her opening epigraph is from Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, a novel about sex changes and sexual pleasure. But she begins

with Ovid (b. 43 B.C.E.), whose *Metamorphoses*—the title translates as “shape changes”—was influential on literature from ancient times to the present. Tiresias was a character who, after accidentally becoming a woman, was asked by the gods to settle the question of who had more enjoyment during sex, men or women. He ultimately said that women had more fun, but in the end he chose to return to being a man. Even Jove, first of the gods, becomes a woman, Diana, in order to seduce Callisto, who found what she thought a goddess to be irresistible.

Then Haskell brings Shakespeare into focus. His many plays have explored varieties of sexual expression that in some instances seem almost inside out. Because no women were permitted on stage in Elizabethan times, boys usually played the female roles. Some of these characters were then, due to plot developments, supposed to be females who were dressing as males, something that would have either given Shakespeare’s audiences a laugh or perplexed them. Haskell cites especially *As You Like It*, whose very title seems an invitation for gender change.

Haskell’s final literary example is that of an author rather than a literary work. She looks to the early years of the twentieth century at someone who cast himself as the most manly of men: Ernest Hemingway. He hunted big game, ran with the bulls, fished for marlin, and often took part in bar brawls as a way of showing his macho credentials. But among his four wives he sometimes cross dressed and often wore his hair in the same fashion as his wife.

The point of all these examples is to show that sexual self-identity can be fluid. While she tells us about these literary examples, she also explains that she is posing questions to her sibling to see what her feelings about her sexuality are. She is trying to understand what was “girly” about her as a child and what her life is like as a transgender woman now. She is very intimate in her examination and asks her sibling about her feelings during sex and how these feelings define her understanding of sexuality.



PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Molly Haskell’s “Who Has It Better, Men or Women?” Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What do ancient writers say about gender?
2. What are Chevey’s views about her own gender?
3. What are the usual gender stereotypes?

Who Has It Better, Men or Women?

Which is the greater ecstasy? The man's or the woman's? ... [T]he pleasures of life were increased and its experiences multiplied. For the probity of breeches she exchanged the seductiveness of petticoats and enjoyed the love of both sexes equally.

—Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*

As I comb the past for clues to my brother's female leanings, this argument stands out, a bone of contention through the years. With the fervor of a tomboy, and later buttressed by feminist argument, I maintained that of course men had the advantage. The world was essentially organized hierarchically around the idea of male supremacy. Women's opportunities were few, their status borrowed, their vocation marriage. A deeply ingrained double standard was endemic, socially, sexually, professionally. Chevey, more controversially, argued for women. They might work or not, but their place in society and even their self-esteem didn't depend on it, while men were born into the burden of proving themselves, their professional success their identity. The pressure was enormous, and to him far outweighed the excitement of work, the lure of power and distinction. He apparently wanted the right *not* to be ambitious, not to compete. Was this because I so much wanted to? And the first person he didn't want to compete with was me? At the time, I thought some of this might come from his childhood vision of male vulnerability. My father had contracted ALS¹ when he was fifty-three. I was thirteen then, and Chevey eight. (In fact, it was about the time that he started poking around

in my closet.) My little brother watched as this youthful man withered and died, while the women in his life survived and flourished. Hence, no doubt, the fury expressed in the aforementioned screed attacking me for not supporting myself, and, by implication, Mother for helping me out.

See what kind of service you get when you call someone on a business matter, go to a hotel, deal with workmen, appear alone at a restaurant!

Still, I thought now—and said to him on the telephone—just you wait. See what kind of service you get when you call someone on a business matter, go to a hotel, deal with workmen, appear alone at a restaurant! And sex ... you'll be at the mercy of some man's taste or distaste, no longer the one who chooses and initiates.

Even before Orlando posed the question as to whose is the greater ecstasy, possibly the first known expert in these matters was the fabled Tiresias,² who had lived as both man and woman. Jove and Juno were having a heated dispute as to which sex had more fun in bed, and called in Tiresias to settle the argument.

In Ovid's³ version, Jove, like my brother, argued for women, advancing a similar argument but in sexual terms. The wily and indefatigable god who never lost an opportunity to seduce, rape,

and ravish had the gall to whine, “[W]omen have more joy / In making love than men; we do the work, / While you have all the fun.” Tiresias agreed and, in her fury, Juno struck him blind. Yet for all that supposed female *jouissance*, Tiresias, when given the opportunity, chose to return to being male.

Many have evoked Tiresias to express the longing we all must feel at some moment to be the other sex. Christopher Hitchens⁴ alluded to the myth in his eloquent and sexually ambidextrous memoir *Hitch-22*: “I would seriously like to know what it was like to be a woman, but like blind Tiresias I would also like the option of remaining myself if I wished.” So we have the vicarious consolations of art and myth ... and books and movies, and even movie stars, with whom we identify regardless of sex, or rather, precisely because of sex, since we can “be” both or either at the moment of watching.

Shape-shifting and the slipperiness of gender have never been more astutely and wittily explored than in Ovid, the renegade, the champion of women and pleasure against the stern patriotism of Virgil and the repressive hypervirility of Augustus Caesar.⁵ In one story, Jove, in order to seduce the lovely young Arcadian Callisto, disguises himself as Diana, the girl’s idol. It works. Says Callisto: “Hail, goddess whose deep spell on me is greater / Than Jove’s himself.” And Jove’s disarming response: “Jove laughed at being preferred above himself” and gave her “tongue to tongue, a most immoderate kiss.”

Poor Callisto, no longer a virgin, is banished by Diana; then Juno, whose jealousy is “forever on the boil,” whose sex is sublimated into wrath, turns her into a bear. But the point is that for Callisto, Diana exerts a greater spell than Jove’s. Brandon Teena,⁶ according to the girl-friends Dunne interviewed for his article, exerted the same feminine appeal. He was sensitive to their needs and able to play mother, sister, boyfriend, and father to these damaged souls.

Will we prefer Ellen-*herself* to John-*himself*? Isn’t there an even deeper lesson here: that the *she*-Jove is more attractive to women than the *he*-Jove? And wasn’t this what made my brother so lovable—all those she-qualities he possessed? While I was too far away to be useful, he was wonderful with Mother, spoiled her when she was healthy and vital, acting as unpaid accountant and a great deal more, and then, when she grew ill and finally housebound with emphysema, he had been in constant attendance, arranging for caretakers, visiting, watching over her.

I ask him about this empathy.

“When I would be walking along with a girlfriend or woman friend, whether you’re having a cup of coffee or enjoying a party or getting in and out of a car or having intercourse, you’re thinking you’re inside her mind, thinking what she’s feeling and understanding what she needs.”

“And women responded to you?”

“Yes, I think so, even if they didn’t understand why. But obviously I was more interested in who they were. I was never into male bonding. I was interested in all aspects; it helped a lot in sex, but really in all aspects. Of course there are other men who are ‘into’ women that way, and I’m not saying I was perfect at it, but then every woman is different and you don’t have an automatic window where everything’s clear. But at least you realize different ways of looking at things and interpreting things. So while I don’t exactly know what she needs or wants, at least I know I want to try and understand.”

In a sense, the transsexual proves by his/her ability to emotionally identify with both sexes that he’s the exception to the rule, the “hybrid” that both confirms and challenges the divide between male and female, between masculine and feminine. Sexual stereotypes—genetic or environmental? Hardwired or mutable? What’s “natural” or “normal” in one culture may be anathema in another. A redhead in Poland is considered good luck, but redheads are bad luck in Corsica, and in Egypt they are burned. So important is a melodious singing voice in Wales that those who can’t sing are ostracized. Epileptics are felt to be possessed by sacred spirits among the Hmong in Laos. In Western cultures, dating back to the Greeks, effeminacy in males has been seen as a disease, a perversion, whereas in a South American country an androgynous male can have godlike powers, uniting male and female, like the “two-spirit” people of some Native American tribes. Male and female may signify opposites to us, but in China, “yin” and “yang” mean an ultimate merger. There is ritualized transvestism in Bali, whereas in the West, drag is most often

either broadly comical (hetero men in dresses) or disturbingly beautiful, like the divas of the “ball culture” in the documentary *Paris Is Burning*.

To these normative fixed poles of Western culture, however, resistance has run like an underground river, expressing itself in myths of hybrids and hermaphrodites, in art and mythology, that test, tease, and destabilize our sexual certainties. The sexual burlesques of Aristophanes and Euripides,⁷ raucous travesties of hypermasculinity, and the plays of Shakespeare reveal earlier artists and audiences more comfortable with jokes about virility and send-ups of sexual stereotypes. Like Ovid, from whose fables he so often drew, Shakespeare, the grand master of sexual paradox, appreciates the crisscrossing of not only male and female characteristics but interspecies as well. See, for example, Bottom the ass making love to Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Beatrice and Benedick, the screwball opposites of *Much Ado About Nothing*, speaking and mocking the artificial language of courtship, exposing the obligatory nature of male-female roles. The fact that men, or boys, played women only added extra layers to the pun, with *As You Like It* and its Russian-doll roundelay of sexual disguise—a man dressed as woman dressed as man—the ultimate joke on gender.

In his emphasis on artifice and role-playing, on life as theatre, - Shakespeare is the great poet of straying gender, understanding the degree to which our sexual myths and stereotypes are far from natural but are culturally created, thus susceptible to changing fashion. But the role reversals, the upending of

stereotypes, the lure of regression may speak to an audience's fears as well as desires. Such violations of "nature" and order, including passion itself, are fraught with peril for the afflicted/liberated characters. The danger, Ovid understood, is that once we leave our secure perch, once Io becomes a cow, Callisto a bear, Viola a man, Bottom an ass, we will be neither one thing nor the other, will be unable to communicate with either side, and will tumble into a void of indeterminacy.

Religion provides us with other wildly differing precepts and prohibitions. Christianity believes in the sacredness of the soul and the profanity of the body: sex got its bad reputation when the church, defining itself in opposition to Judaism, formalized the association between Eve and carnality. Judaism, by contrast, placed its faith, more literally, in the human body, the here and now. The body was sacrosanct, death should be followed (almost immediately) by burial rather than cremation. So it finds itself in a Talmudic bind where the anatomically correct transsexual is concerned.

Since it's evident from the outset that male and female can't contain the "whole diverse panoply of genders and gender identities," Lori Lefkowitz⁸ suggests we reread a passage of Genesis—*zachar u'nikevah*—not as "'God created every human being as either male or female,' but rather 'God created human kind male and female and every combination in between'."

The religions align in the belief that the way things are is the way they have to be. Until times change and religious authority wanes.

Once, the definition of marriage as the union between a man and a woman was as fixed and impregnable as the Rock of Gibraltar; now the marital vows are being extended, state by state, to partners of the same sex.

The perversities of religious law and superstition (are they not the same thing?) are nowhere more evident than in the interpretation of the Koran in present-day Iran. Under its current policy, homosexuals are condemned, even executed, while the state not only accepts transsexuals but provides money for surgery. Documenting this remarkable anomaly is the film *Be Like Others*, showing us individuals in the course of sex change (some to escape the dangers of homosexuality).

The Koran explicitly condemns homosexuality as an evil, whereas there is nothing in it that forbids transsexualism, and the Ayatollah Khomeini⁹ even issued a fatwa permitting sex changes. According to one story, a transsexual female stormed the Ayatollah's compound, opened up her top, and declared herself a woman who needed help. Khomeini said, "Woman, put on a chador. Cover yourself. You're disgraceful." And the woman said it was the happiest moment in her life.

At a transsexual support conference in Tehran the speaker is an imam who reaffirms Khomeini's dictum that transsexualism is not a sin unless so stated in the Koran. People argue that it's unnatural, says the theologian, that it changes God's natural order, but, he continues, we take wheat and turn it into flour and turn that into bread.

And so does the definition of what's "natural" change in the eye of the beholder and of holy writ.

And what about hormones? Rather than a clear-cut battle—testosterone versus estrogen—the picture is considerably more mixed. It's not that testosterone isn't a marker for male aggression, risk taking, playing with guns and fire engines, even looking at women in a certain way: it is.

A friend in Canada dropped in on a fellow scientist, a patient in a Toronto hospital, who'd been given estrogen for his disease. He was heterosexual but noted that he felt like a different person on the hormone, began looking at women's faces rather than their breasts, listening to them rather than waiting to take over the conversation.

Chaz Bono,¹⁰ Cher's daughter-now-son, appears in a documentary about his transition. One can't help but suspect, and he partly confirms, that this pudgy child of anorexic celebrity parents—parents who trotted her out onstage with them—simply wanted to get out of that humiliating body. The new Chaz not only looks masculine as he proudly exposes his surgically flattened chest but has changed psychologically: he is, he says, less tolerant of gossip (compare this to the now gossip-loving Jan Morris¹¹) and is more interested in machinery and male-type gadgets. He has also, by his own and his female partner's admission, lost some of "her" niceness and empathy in the process.

And it's not that estrogen doesn't make girls into sympathetic, supportive emotional figures who play with dolls and teacups: it does. But the overlap is perhaps even more significant. In fact, women do produce testosterone (men in their testicles, women in their ovaries and adrenal glands), but far less than men. Women injected with testosterone develop male characteristics, like deeper voices, facial hair, and even baldness. Tomboys have higher levels of testosterone, as do their mothers. To make matters more interesting, research connects higher testosterone to working women, and this characteristic is passed on to their daughters! I fully believe that something in my mother—her repressed ambition, her analytic mind, maybe a high level of testosterone—was passed on to me.

There is, at least for now, one area—sports—where fudging is impossible, and where we see biological determinacy at its starkest and most unforgiving; but even that is changing under the pressure of those who argue that the subjective sense of self should be the determining factor. I remember well the outrage caused by Renée Richards;¹² in clubs all over the country, queasiness and unease took the form of dire predictions: male players who ranked below the top 20 or 30 would change sex in order to compete in the women's game. Didn't happen. Jennifer Boylan¹³ has argued that how one identifies oneself should be the deciding factor. I wonder if Chevey agrees and ask him about it during a phone conversation.

“No, I don't. They have to make a determination, and genetic testing isn't it, but it has to be done, maybe by muscle mass,

strength, speed. If someone has a clear preponderance of masculine traits, it's like steroids. It gives an unfair advantage."

Chevey was never an athlete, but it was because he had a bad eye. I ask about testosterone, did he have feelings of aggression?

"I was never the sort of timid Clark Kent type but not some big brute of a guy wanting to smash heads, either."

In a later recorded interview, we get into the specifics of sex: a subject so fraught, yet it's strange how natural these conversations have come to seem. "What about a sex drive; did you have one, or not that much?"

"I think I did. I think I was a very good lover. I always made sure."

"Did you want to date girls?"

"Yes, I loved them as friends as well as potential sexual partners. I think that's true of men as well, although they may never get enough credit in that area.

"It's hard to know what is typical; nobody talked about it, or if they did they lied. But in my early teenage years, I think I had—I know I had—strong feelings of both male and female, boy and girl. I wasn't the stereotype transsexual who felt totally female. And this is turning out to be a major aspect of my life. I was attracted to both girls and boys and naturally I didn't understand any of this. I thought, Am I gay? Of course even then—we use the term 'gay'

now—we didn't use it then. All those song lyrics—'Don we now our gay apparel'—you can't sing them, the word has been totally corrupted. It's like so many things: it's hard to go back and remember how it was, we've learned so much since then. I certainly didn't know the term 'bisexual' then. A lot of people say there's no such thing as bisexual, but I don't agree." I ask him if he masturbated.

"Yes, a lot—and eventually I could only ejaculate by picturing myself as a woman. When I loved and made love to a woman, I identified with her, but I also wanted to give her pleasure. I tried so many times to change my mental image but I was just never able to."

"Did you ever try aversion therapy?"

"Not officially, but for many years, every time I was going to make love to Eleanor, I would say to myself over and over, 'You will not imagine yourself a woman, you will not imagine yourself as a woman.' But then I couldn't perform. The only way I could, and give her pleasure, was by picturing myself as a woman. And don't forget that in a long relationship, couples start fantasizing other lovers, movie stars, whatever."

"But where's the male in your scenario?"

"The person I'm touching is the male. If you're a male having sex with a female, and I think a female might say the same thing, the penis could belong to either one. You can't really tell who it's

attached to. You close your eyes, there's no light in the room, and it's very easy to get lost. Most people don't think about that."

Or, I think, maybe they know but repress it. Because somehow the act of sex shatters boundaries we need to keep in place. By idealizing sex as "making love," we can retain the idea of our unique male and female individuality. But we're merged, more like e. e. cummings's girlboys and boygirls.

Chevey thus confirms what the transsexual community went to great lengths to deny: the theory, advanced by Michael Bailey,¹⁴ of *auto-gynephilia* (i.e., having an erotic obsession with the image of oneself as a woman).

The term, which made Bailey anathema to the transsexual community, was from psychologist Ray Blanchard's¹⁵ study of a man who hadn't cross-dressed but had fantasized himself as a naked woman having sex with a man. Bailey's book, designed for the general public, brought down the wrath of the transgender community in particularly vicious terms.

I can understand the resistance to the concept, if not the venom of the attack. The image smacks of Narcissus, even a betrayal of the sexual partner, which makes it hard to accept. Also it's a reminder of the dark side of sex, the aloneness at the moment of climax, and the fact that there's a certain amount of autogynephilia in all of us, as well as curiosity about what it's like to be the opposite sex.

This is a fantasy that may be stronger in some than in others. One of the most fascinating revelations in recent Hemingway studies (or rather, insights that have emerged from a less protective view of material already available) is a more precise understanding of the “dark side” he often wrote about. Details accumulate in both the novels and the life, like the recurring hair fetish. In *A Farewell to Arms*,¹⁶ Lt. Frederic Henry describes the erotic charge he receives watching Catherine have her hair done (his voice becomes “a little thick from being excited”), and she wants them to cut their hair the same lengths, so they can be “just alike.”

Catherine: “I want to be you.”

Henry: “We’re the same one.”

Catherine: “At night we are.”

Similarly, in the early days in Paris as described in *A Moveable Feast*, Ernest and Hadley,¹⁷ at his urging, grew their hair long together; throughout his marriages and friendships he urged his women to dye, cut, or otherwise change their hair, and supervised the process, even dying his own hair red in a moment of stress. Both Ernest and Mary Hemingway, his last wife, wrote about her wanting to become a boy, and about the sex games they played in which she was the boy and he the girl. What Hemingway considers a dangerous loss of identity is reimagined in his posthumously published novel *The Garden of Eden*, when another Catherine cuts and cuts her hair and changes and changes (“I’m a girl, but I’m a boy too and I can do anything and anything and anything”), and when, in the dark of their lovemaking, the writer-

protagonist becomes Catherine, and says, “Now you can’t tell who is who, can you?”

For Hemingway such deviancy was a “corruption” that gradually corrodes the self. And ends—at least for Catherine—in madness. Gregory (Gigi), Hemingway’s third son (he wanted a daughter), was considered the most talented of Hemingway’s children, the most like his father, and also, in the words of Gigi’s son John Hemingway, the “black sheep of the family.” In *Strange Tribe*, John describes his father’s mental instability, his manic-depression, and the cross-dressing that began when he was ten years old. Although Gigi married several times, and even worked as a doctor, he was more often adrift and living in ramshackle style. He was arrested several times for dressing as a woman in public. His father reported that it was for “drug abuse,” and felt that the scandal of Gigi’s first arrest in a Los Angeles movie theater had killed his mother, Pauline, Hemingway’s second wife. Finally, as Gigi’s life spiraled downward, he underwent a sex change—which solved nothing. He, now she, wound up dead in a Miami jail, wearing women’s clothes.

Father and son were both heterosexual, passionate lovers of women, and yet both had a strong female side that Hemingway père was at least able to ventriloquize in his novels. Hemingway’s theatrically hypermale image and legend can be seen as a defense against fear—fear not just of the woman in himself, but of the women in his life, the Others whom he so needed and depended on. (There were four wives and no gap: each wife-to-be supplanted her predecessor before the marriage was over.)

One reason Hemingway endures, like his rival, enemy, and friend F. Scott Fitzgerald,¹⁸ is the palpable sense of vulnerability, a nakedness he exposes to the world. Hemingway's brave and edgy flirtation with the darkness of transvestism speaks to the longing and fear in all of us of losing the self in the other, of merging until we disappear.

I think of Chevey and me as children, both trying to kiss our elbows. Then I think of us as teenagers, each standing alone before a mirror. (Which of us is the "real" girl?) We have as yet but the dimmest idea of sex or "sexual identity." We've read books, watched movies, memorized certain images, and are gradually assembling the bits and pieces of imaginary adult selves. We kiss the mirror (my lover/my self), pose, apply makeup, try on different dresses (the same ones?), practicing for the lovers we hope will come to tell us who we are.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. Why does Chevey argue for women having things better?
2. Why does Molly Haskell argue for masculine supremacy?
3. What did Tiresias say about sexual pleasure?
4. Why does Haskell point to Ovid and Shakespeare's examples?
5. What are Chevey's feminine qualities?
6. What advantages might a transsexual have in a sexual relationship?
7. Are sexual stereotypes universal?



QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Read or see Shakespeare's play *As You Like It* (or choose another play that Haskell mentions) and examine it carefully for its presumptions about sexual stereotypes, sexual assumptions, and sexual behavior and pleasure. How does Shakespeare help us better understand the relations between the sexes? Is it possible to say which sex "has it better"?
2. Haskell mentions some well-known contemporary figures who have had sex changes, particularly Chaz Bono, son of Sonny and Cher Bono. She also mentions the tennis star Renée Richards, who switched from the men's PGA to the LPGA and was thought to have a special advantage. She does not mention Caitlyn Jenner, who had been a major Olympic star as a man. How has society responded to their transformations? What does the popular press say about them, and in what circumstances have there been repudiation or praise? What have been the most persistent questions about their sex changes?
3. What do you feel your most immediate friends think about transgender assignment? Are your friends accepting of these changes, or are they critical and resistant? What seem to be the main arguments in favor and in opposition? Where do you stand? What do your parents, grandparents, or other older relatives think about trans men and women? Is there a major difference in attitude mainly on the basis of age, or is it on the basis of experience?
4. Take as wide a poll as you can in your immediate environment and ask the question that Haskell uses as the title of her essay: "Who Has It Better, Men or Women?" You can ask this in terms of general social benefits or opportunities, or you can ask it in terms of sexual experience. Try to find as large and diverse a group as possible to query. What conclusions do you draw from your inquiry? Do you agree with the majority of those you poll, or do you agree with the minority?
5. Haskell discusses hormones, testosterone, and estrogen. What do we know about how these two biological factors affect behavior? What does she say about them, and what can you find in the

literature of sex about them? Have recent biological studies done much to change the views that you had before you began to research the field?

CONNECTIONS

1. Judith Butler's essay "[Undoing Gender](#)" deals directly with the issues that are involved in changing one's gender. What does Butler say that will help a reader better understand what Haskell tells us about her sibling? Does Butler help you empathize with Chevey or with his sister? Write an essay that argues for or against transgender assignment, using these essays as the basis of your argument.
2. Haskell raises issues relative to the question of biological assignment. How does the material she explores in her essay relate to the biological issues in Charles Darwin's "[Natural Selection](#)"? Darwin had read Ovid and most of the Shakespeare plays and was a close student of sexual behavior in nature. What insights do we gain on the nature of sexuality from reading these two essays? How might Darwin have responded to the issues that have been raised in - Haskell's discussion of her sibling's choices in sexuality?



Catherine A. MacKinnon *Sexual Harassment: Its First Decade in Court* (Chapter 9 from *Feminism Unmodified*)



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CATHARINE MACKINNON (b. 1946) is the Elizabeth A. Long Professor of Law at the University of Michigan Law School. She has taught at Yale, Harvard, Stanford, UCLA, the University of Chicago, and other university law schools. Her work in feminist

legal studies has resulted in profound changes in the general attitude of lawyers toward cases of sexual harassment, largely because of the connections she established between sexual harassment and the violation of civil rights statutes. Her pioneering work, especially *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination* (1979), has been used as the basis of judicial decisions concerning harassment. MacKinnon has devoted her professional life to issues of gender and the law, and her most recent book, *Butterfly Politics* (2017), looks back at her more than forty years of activism.

For MacKinnon, the political question of gender dominance parallels Frederick Douglass's discussion of the politics of slavery—most Americans are familiar enough with stereotyped pictorial and literary depictions of African Americans to understand the effect such representations have on those who are oppressed. MacKinnon's views on pornography and men's sexual dominance over women have garnered significant attention and at times provoked controversy, drawing fire from liberals, conservatives, and even feminist groups. With antipornography writer Andrea Dworkin (1946–2005) she drafted an ordinance in Minneapolis, now widely known as the Dworkin–MacKinnon ordinance, which forbids the subordination of women in pictures and words because it is a form of sex discrimination. This ordinance was later challenged in the courts and struck down as a violation of the First Amendment right to free speech, illustrating the tension in the law around protecting oppressed groups at the same time as individual freedoms. Pornography and sexual harassment are not her only concerns, however. Among her important books are

Feminism Unmodified: Discourse on Life and Law (1987) and *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (1989), which interprets the structure of contemporary government as the reflection of persistent patterns of male domination.

MacKinnon's essay, "Sexual Harassment and Sexual Politics," examines the development in recent decades of legal precedents concerning sexual harassment. Her specific subject is the sexual harassment of women in the workplace, but she discusses the underlying issues in a wide-ranging examination that considers the effect of the law on individuals and society. She concerns herself with the politics of gender discrimination—which is one of the ways she interprets the entire phenomenon of harassment. Because the victims of sexual harassment are usually women and because the legal cases that have helped shape local and federal laws have almost uniformly concerned women victims, MacKinnon establishes that the offense is gender-based. A number of specific instances, as she explains, contribute to forming our general view of harassment in these terms.

In a *New York Times* article, "#MeToo Has Done What the Law Could Not" (Feb. 4, 2018), MacKinnon applauded the #MeToo movement, which began in 2017, reminding us that even when a law exists condemning sexual harassment, that does not mean sexual harassment ends. Many laws exist condemning racism, but racism exists. What MacKinnon applauds is the willingness of women to step forward and press their case. As she says, "Sexual harassment law prepared the ground, but it is today's movement that is shifting gender hierarchy's tectonic plates."

Moreover, MacKinnon's work explored underlying issues, such as the general male attitude toward women and their sexuality. For MacKinnon, harassment is not only a form of exploitation but part of a pattern of sexual politics that is interpreted differently by each gender. She asserts that men generally assume that women are available sexually and that they are defined in these terms. Men's views on what constitutes sexual harassment differ generally and historically from those of women. The question of what a woman means by withholding consensual sex is understood differently by each gender, and sometimes those differences color the outcome of legal cases.

One of the issues MacKinnon explores in this essay is how case law affects legislation. Laws against sexual harassment have developed recently in response to individual cases tried in court. She sees these laws as coming after, rather than before, legal testing in the courts—unlike many of the laws that we take for granted. As she tells us, “The legal claim for sexual harassment marks the first time in history, to my knowledge, that women have defined women's injuries in a law” ([para. 7](#)).

MacKinnon's essay addresses the issue of sexual harassment partly with examples and implied definitions. She frequently cites legal cases to provide authority for her claims. Sexual harassment, she explains, happens to women because of their gender. Originally, she says, it was argued that sexual harassment could happen to men as well as women, and therefore it was not a gender issue. MacKinnon answers this in part by pointing to the numbers: the overwhelming number of plaintiffs are women. The

women who bring sexual harassment charges to court must undergo unusual personal scrutiny into their own sexual history and their character. When Clarence Thomas was nominated to the Supreme Court, for example, legal professor Anita Hill made allegations of sexual harassment against him. The entire country watched the daily television coverage that demonstrated the kind of personal pain both individuals suffer because of assumptions that personal character is a key to defining harassment. Such assumptions make a harassment trial an odious procedure, especially since, as MacKinnon argues, the plaintiff's background is probably irrelevant. Time has not healed that wound. When Christine Blasey Ford accused Brett Kavanaugh of sexual harassment, she faced the same kind of treatment as Anita Hill, but she was also a victim of repeated death threats that made her and her family go into hiding. The president himself belittled her after Kavanaugh was installed in the Supreme Court.

MACKINNON'S RHETORIC

Originally delivered as a speech, this essay was revised and published in a volume of MacKinnon's speeches and essays. In its revised form it contains numerous footnotes (most omitted here) that refer the reader to legal documents. On the one hand the essay aims to convince the reader of its authoritativeness and thoroughness by careful reference; at the same time, it aims to be engaging and to evoke the listener's responses to important and emotional issues.

MacKinnon is a lawyer, and the structure of the essay reflects that of a legal argument. Indeed, several arguments coexist. One is that sexual harassment is a crime of oppression against women and that its implications are fundamentally political. Another is that our views of harassment are shaped by our attitudes toward women as sexual beings. The victimization of women, she says, does not stop with harassment or rape but continues through hearings and trials, so that it takes an unusual amount of courage for a woman to bring charges.

Her special analytic approach is evident in her analysis of the *quid pro quo* argument ([para. 19](#)). She says that many people see sexual harassment charges as incidents of this argument. The Latin term means “this for that”: in this context, sex in return for a special consideration. In other words, a woman is forced into yielding to her boss sexually in hopes of not being fired, or of getting a promotion or a raise. If he does not come through with the promise, then a charge is brought on the basis of an injury: the *quo* was not provided after receipt of the *quid*. In two cases she cites, one in business and one in education, men assume that since the woman had sex, she is not entitled to damages, because in their view sex is what women are for ([para. 21](#)). Further, there is the question of whether the “woman is valuable enough to hurt” ([para. 22](#)). In these thoughtful progressions, some of MacKinnon’s disdain for what she sees as masculine politics begins to show.

Generally, MacKinnon’s tone is serious and detached, much in the spirit of the language of the law. On the other hand, she does not

resort to cliché or legalese. Her hope is that a general reader will understand her with ease. Through this and her other work, MacKinnon has made important contributions to the understanding of legal issues involved in sexual harassment.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Catharine A. MacKinnon's "Sexual Harassment and Sexual Politics." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What are the two forms of sexual harassment?
2. Why is sexual harassment a legal issue?
3. What are hierarchies of men?

Sexual Harassment: Its First Decade in Court

Sexual harassment, the event, is not new to women. It is the law of injuries that it is new to. Sexual pressure imposed on someone who is not in an economic position to refuse it became sex discrimination in the midseventies, and in education soon afterward. It became possible to do something legal about sexual harassment because some women took women's experience of violation seriously enough to design a law around it, as if what happens to women matters. This was apparently such a startling way of proceeding that sexual harassment was protested as a feminist invention. Sexual harassment, the event, was not invented by feminists; the perpetrators did that with no help from us. Sexual harassment, the legal claim—the idea that the law should see it the way its victims see it—is definitely a feminist invention. Feminists first took women's experience seriously enough to uncover this problem and conceptualize it and pursue it legally. That legal claim is just beginning to produce more than a handful of reported cases. Ten years later, “[i]t may well be that sex harassment is the hottest present day Title VII issue.”¹ It is time for a down-the-road assessment of this departure.

The law against sexual harassment is a practical attempt to stop a form of exploitation. It is also one test of sexual politics as feminist jurisprudence, of possibilities for social change for women through law. The existence of a law against sexual harassment has affected both the context of meaning within which social life is lived and the concrete delivery of rights through the legal system.

The sexually harassed have been given a name for their suffering and an analysis that connects it with gender. They have been given a forum, legitimacy to speak, authority to make claims, and an avenue for possible relief. Before, what happened to them was all right. Now it is not.

This matters. Sexual abuse mutes victims socially through the violation itself. Often the abuser enforces secrecy and silence; secrecy and silence may be part of what is so sexy about sexual abuse. When the state also forecloses a validated space for denouncing and rectifying the victimization, it seals this secrecy and reinforces this silence. The harm of this process, a process that utterly precludes speech, then becomes all of a piece. If there is no right place to go to say, this hurt me, then a woman is simply the one who can be treated this way, and no harm, as they say, is done.

In point of fact, I would prefer not to have to spend all this energy getting the law to recognize wrongs to women as wrong. But it seems to be necessary to legitimize our injuries as injuries in order to delegitimize our victimization by them, without which it is difficult to move in more positive ways. The legal claim for sexual harassment made the events of sexual harassment illegitimate socially as well as legally for the first time. Let me know if you figure out a better way to do that.

At this interface between law and society, we need to remember that the legitimacy courts give they can also take. Compared with a possibility of relief where no possibility of relief existed, since

women started out with nothing in this area, this worry seems a bit fancy. Whether the possibility of relief alters the terms of power that gives rise to sexual harassment itself, which makes getting away with it possible, is a different problem. Sexual harassment, the legal claim, is a demand that state authority stand behind women's refusal of sexual access in certain situations that previously were a masculine prerogative. With sexism, there is always a risk that our demand for self-determination will be taken as a demand for paternal protection and will therefore strengthen male power rather than undermine it. This seems a particularly valid concern because the law of sexual harassment began as case law, without legislative guidance or definition.

Institutional support for sexual self-determination is a victory; institutional paternalism reinforces our lack of self-determination. The problem is, the state has never in fact protected women's dignity or bodily integrity. It just says it does. Its protections have been both condescending *and* unreal, in effect strengthening the protector's choice to violate the protected at will, whether the protector is the individual perpetrator or the state. This does not seem to me a reason not to have a law against sexual harassment. It is a reason to demand that the promise of "equal protection of the laws" be *delivered upon* for us, as it is when real people are violated. It is also part of a larger political struggle to value women more than the male pleasure of using us is valued. Ultimately, though, the question of whether the use of the state for women helps or hurts can be answered only in practice, because so little real protection of the laws has ever been delivered.

The legal claim for sexual harassment marks the first time in history, to my knowledge, that women have defined women's injuries in a law. Consider what has happened with rape. We have never defined the injury of rape; men define it. The men who define it, define what they take to be this violation of women according to, among other things, what they think they don't do. In this way rape becomes an act of a stranger (they mean Black) committed upon a woman (white) whom he has never seen before. Most rapes are intraracial and are committed by men the women know. Ask a woman if she has ever been raped, and often she says, "Well ... not really." in that silence between the well and the not really, she just measured what happened to her against every rape case she ever heard about and decided she would lose in court. Especially when you are part of a subordinated group, your own definition of your injuries is powerfully shaped by your assessment of whether you could get anyone to do anything about it, including anything official. You are realistic by necessity, and the voice of law is the voice in power. When the design of a legal wrong does not fit the wrong as it happens to you, as is the case with rape, that law can undermine your social and political as well as legal legitimacy in saying that what happened was an injury at all—even to yourself.

It is never too soon to worry about this, but it may be too soon to know whether the law against sexual harassment will be taken away from us or turn into nothing or turn ugly in our hands. The fact is, this law is working surprisingly well for women by any standards, particularly when compared with the rest of sex discrimination law. If the question is whether a law designed from

women's standpoint and administered through this legal system can do anything for women—which always seems to be a good question—this experience so far gives a qualified and limited yes.

It is hard to unthink what you know, but there was a time when the facts that amount to sexual harassment did not amount to sexual harassment. It is a bit like the injuries of pornography until recently. The facts amounting to the harm did not socially “exist,” had no shape, no cognitive coherence; far less did they state a legal claim. It just happened to you. To the women to whom it happened, it wasn't part of anything, much less something big or shared like gender. It fit no known pattern. It was neither a regularity nor an irregularity. Even social scientists didn't study it, and they study anything that moves. When law recognized sexual harassment as a practice of sex discrimination, it moved it from the realm of “and then he ... and then he ...,” the primitive language in which sexual abuse lives inside a woman, into an experience with a form, an etiology, a cumulativeness—as well as a club.

Once it became possible to do something about sexual harassment, it became possible to know more about it, because it became possible for its victims to speak about it.

The shape, the positioning, and the club—each is equally critical politically. Once it became possible to do something about sexual harassment, it became possible to know more about it, because it became possible for its victims to speak about it. Now we know, as we did not when it first became illegal, that this problem is commonplace. We know this not just because it has to be true, but as documented fact. Between a quarter and a third of women in the federal workforce report having been sexually harassed, many physically, at least once in the last two years. Projected, that becomes 85 percent of all women at some point in their working lives. This figure is based on asking women “Have you ever been sexually harassed?”—the conclusion—not “has this fact happened? has that fact happened?” which usually produces more. The figures for sexual harassment of students are comparable.

When faced with individual incidents of sexual harassment, the legal system’s first question was, is it a personal episode? Legally, this was a way the courts inquired into whether the incidents were based on sex, as they had to be to be sex discrimination. Politically, it was a move to isolate victims by stigmatizing them as deviant. It also seemed odd to me that a relationship was either personal or gendered, meaning that one is not a woman personally. Statistical frequency alone does not make an event not personal, of course, but the presumption that sexual pressure in contexts of unequal power is an isolated idiosyncrasy to unique individual victims has been undermined both by the numbers and by their division by gender. Overwhelmingly, it is men who sexually harass women, a lot of them. Actually, it is even more

accurate to say that men do this than to say that women have this done to them. This is a description of the perpetrators' behavior, not of the statisticians' feminism.

Sexual harassment has also emerged as a creature of hierarchy. It inhabits what I call hierarchies among men: arrangements in which some men are below other men, as in employer/employee and teacher/student. In workplaces, sexual harassment by supervisors of subordinates is common; in education, by administrators of lower-level administrators, by faculty of students. But it also happens among coworkers, from third parties, even by subordinates in the workplace, men who are women's hierarchical inferiors or peers. Basically, it is done by men to women regardless of relative position on the formal hierarchy. I believe that the reason sexual harassment was first established as an injury of the systematic abuse of power in hierarchies among men is that this is power men recognize. They comprehend from personal experience that something is held over your head if you do not comply. The lateral or reverse hierarchical examples suggest something beyond this, something men don't understand from personal experience because they take its advantages for granted: gender is also a hierarchy. The courts do not use this analysis, but some act as though they understand it.

Sex discrimination law had to adjust a bit to accommodate the realities of sexual harassment. Like many other injuries of gender, it wasn't written for this. For something to be based on gender in the legal sense means it happens to a woman as a woman, not as an individual. Membership in a gender is understood as the

opposite of, rather than part of, individuality. Clearly, sexual harassment is one of the last situations in which a woman is treated without regard to her sex; it is because of her sex that it happens. But the social meaning attributed to women as a class, in which women are defined as gender female by sexual accessibility to men, is not what courts have considered before when they have determined whether a given incident occurred because of sex.

Sex discrimination law typically conceives that something happens because of sex when it happens to one sex but not the other. The initial procedure is arithmetic: draw a gender line and count how many of each are on each side in the context at issue, or, alternatively, take the line drawn by the practice or policy and see if it also divides the sexes. One by-product of this head-counting method is what I call the bisexual defense. Say a man is accused of sexually harassing a woman. He can argue that the harassment is not sex-based because he harasses both sexes equally, indiscriminately as it were. Originally it was argued that sexual harassment was not a proper gender claim because someone could harass both sexes. We argued that this was an issue of fact to be pleaded and proven, an issue of did he do this, rather than an issue of law, of whether he could have. The courts accepted that, creating this kamikaze defense. To my knowledge, no one has used the bisexual defense since. As this example suggests, head counting can provide a quick topography of the terrain, but it has proved too blunt to distinguish treatment whose meaning is based on gender from treatment that has other social hermeneutics, especially when only two individuals are involved.

Once sexual harassment was established as bigger than personal, the courts' next legal question was whether it was smaller than biological. To say that sexual harassment was biological seemed to me a very negative thing to say about men, but defendants seemed to think it precluded liability. Plaintiffs argued that sexual harassment is not biological in that men who don't do it have nothing wrong with their testosterone levels. Besides, if murder were found to have biological correlates, it would still be a crime. Thus, although the question purported to be whether the acts were based on sex, the implicit issue seemed to be whether the source of the impetus for doing the acts was relevant to their harmfulness.

Similarly structured was the charge that women who resented sexual harassment were oversensitive. Not that the acts did not occur, but rather that it was unreasonable to experience them as harmful. Such a harm would be based not on sex but on individual hysteria. Again shifting the inquiry away from whether the acts are based on sex in the guise of pursuing it, away from whether they occurred to whether it should matter if they did, the question became whether the acts were properly harmful. Only this time it was not the perpetrator's drives that made him not liable but the target's sensitivity that made the acts not a harm at all. It was pointed out that too many people are victimized by sexual harassment to consider them all hysterics. Besides, in other individual injury law, victims are not blamed; perpetrators are required to take victims as they find them, so long as they are not supposed to be doing what they are doing.

Once these excuses were rejected, then it was said that sexual harassment was not really an employment-related problem. That became hard to maintain when it was her job the woman lost. If it was, in fact, a personal relationship, it apparently did not start and stop there, although this is also a question of proof, leaving the true meaning of the events to trial. The perpetrator may have thought it was all affectionate or friendly or fun, but the victim experienced it as hateful, dangerous, and damaging. Results in such cases have been mixed. Some judges have accepted the perpetrator's view; for instance, one judge held queries by the defendant such as "What am I going to get for this?" and repeated importunings to "go out" to be "susceptible of innocent interpretation."² Other judges, on virtually identical facts, for example, "When are you going to do something nice for me?"³ have held for the plaintiff. For what it's worth, the judge in the first case was a man, in the second a woman.

That sexual harassment is sex-based discrimination seems to be legally established, at least for now. In one of the few recent cases that reported litigating the issue of sex basis, defendants argued that a sex-based claim was not stated when a woman worker complained of terms of abuse directed at her at work such as "slut," "bitch," and "fucking cunt" and "many sexually oriented drawings posted on pillars and at other conspicuous places around the warehouse" with plaintiffs' initials on them, presenting her having sex with an animal. The court said: "[T]he sexually offensive conduct and language used would have been almost irrelevant and would have failed entirely in its crude purpose had the plaintiff been a man. I do not hesitate to find that but for her

sex, the plaintiff would not have been subjected to the harassment she suffered.” “Obvious” or “patently obvious” they often call it. I guess this is what it looks like to have proven a point.

Sexual harassment was first recognized as an injury of gender in what I called incidents of quid pro quo.⁴ Sometimes people think that harassment has to be constant. It doesn't; it's a term of art in which once can be enough. Typically, an advance is made, rejected, and a loss follows. For a while it looked as if this three-step occurrence was in danger of going from one form in which sexual harassment can occur into a series of required hurdles. In many situations the woman is forced to submit instead of being able to reject the advance. The problem has become whether, say, being forced into intercourse at work will be seen as a failed quid pro quo or as an instance of sexual harassment in which the forced sex constitutes the injury.

I know of one reported case in employment and one in education in which women who were forced to submit to the sex brought a sexual harassment claim against the perpetrator; so far only the education case has won on the facts. The employment case that lost on the facts was reversed on appeal. The pressures for sex were seen to state a claim without respect to the fact that the woman was not able to avoid complying. It is unclear if the unwanted advances constitute a claim, separate and apart from whether or not they are able to be resisted, which they should; or if the acts of forced sex would also constitute an environmental claim separate from any quid pro quo, as it seems to me they also should. In the education case, the case of Paul Mann, the

students were allowed to recover punitive damages for the forced sex. If sexual harassment is not to be defined only as sexual attention imposed upon someone who is not in a position to refuse it, who refuses it, women who are forced to submit to sex must be understood as harmed not less, but as much or more, than those who are able to make their refusals effective.

Getting recoveries for women who have actually been sexually violated by the defendant will probably be a major battle. Women being compensated in money for sex they *had* violates male metaphysics because in that system sex is what a woman is for. As one judge concluded, “[T]here does not seem to be any issue that the plaintiff did not desire to have relations with [the defendant], but it is also altogether apparent that she willingly had sex with him.” Now what do you make of that? The woman was not physically forced at the moment of penetration, and since it is sex she must have willed it, is about all you can make of it. The sexual politics of the situation is that men do not see a woman who has had sex as victimized, whatever the conditions. One dimension of this problem involves whether a woman who has been violated through sex has any credibility. Credibility is difficult to separate from the definition of the injury, since an injury in which the victim is not believed to have been injured *because she has been injured* is not a real injury, legally speaking.

The question seems to be whether a woman is valuable enough to hurt, so that what is done to her is a harm. Once a woman has had sex, voluntarily or by force—it doesn’t matter—she is regarded as too damaged to be further damageable, or

something. Many women who have been raped in the course of sexual harassment have been advised by their lawyers not to mention the rape because it would destroy their credibility! The fact that abuse is long term has suggested to some finders of fact that it must have been tolerated or even wanted, although sexual harassment that becomes a condition of work has also been established as a legal claim in its own right. I once was talking with a judge about a case he was sitting on in which Black teenage girls alleged that some procedures at their school violated their privacy. He told me that with their sexual habits they had no privacy to lose. It seemed he knew what their sexual habits were from evidence in the case, examples of the privacy violations.

The more aggravated an injury becomes, the more it ceases to exist. Why is incomprehensible to me, but how it functions is not. Our most powerful moment is on paper, in complaints we frame, and our worst is in the flesh in court. Although it isn't much, we have the most credibility when we are only the idea of us and our violation in their minds. In our allegations we construct reality to some extent; face to face, their angle of vision frames us irrevocably. In court we have breasts, we are Black, we are (in a word) women. Not that we are ever free of that, but the moment we physically embody our complaint, and they can see us, the pornography of the process starts in earnest.

I have begun to think that a major reason that many women do not bring sexual harassment complaints is that they know this. They cannot bear to have their personal account of sexual abuse

reduced to a fantasy they invented, used to define them and to pleasure the finders of fact and the public. I think they have a very real sense that their accounts are enjoyed, that others are getting pleasure from the first-person recounting of their pain, and that is the content of their humiliation at these rituals. When rape victims say they feel sexually harassed in the adjudication, it is not exactly metaphor. I hear that they—in being publicly sexually humiliated by the legal system, as by the perpetrator—are pornography. The first time it happens, it is called freedom; the second time, it is called justice.

If a woman is sexually defined—meaning all women fundamentally, intensified by previous sexual abuse or identification as lesbian, indelible if a prostitute—her chances of recovery for sexual abuse are correspondingly reduced. I'm still waiting for a woman to win at trial against a man who forced her to comply with the sex. Suppose the male plaintiff in one sexual harassment case who rented the motel room in which the single sexual encounter took place had been a woman, and the perpetrator had been a man. When the relationship later went bad, it was apparently not a credibility problem for *him* at trial that he had rented the motel room. Nor was *his* sexual history apparently an issue. Nor, apparently, was it said when he complained he was fired because the relationship went bad, that he had “asked for” the relationship. That case was reversed on appeal on legal grounds, but he did win at trial. The best one can say about women in such cases is that women who have had sex but not with the accused may have some chance. In one case the judge did not believe the plaintiff's denial of an affair with another

coworker, but did believe that she had been sexually harassed by the defendant, in another, the woman plaintiff actually had “linguistic intimacy” with another man at work, yet when she said that what happened to her with the defendant was sexual harassment, she was believed. These are miraculous. A woman’s word on these matters is usually indivisible. In another case a woman accused two men of sexual harassment. She had resisted and refused one man to whom she had previously submitted under pressure for a long time. He was in the process of eliminating her from her job when the second man raped her. The first man’s defense was that it went on so long, she must have liked it. The second man’s defense was that he had heard that she had had sexual relations with the first man, so he felt this was something she was open to. This piggyback defense is premised on the class definition of woman as whore, by which I mean what men mean: one who exists to be sexually done to, to be sexually available on men’s terms, that is, a woman, if this definition of women, is accepted, it means that if a woman has ever had sex, forced or voluntary, she can’t be sexually violated.

A woman can be seen in these terms by being a former rape victim or by the way she uses language. One case holds that the evidence shows “the allegedly harassing conduct was substantially welcomed and encouraged by plaintiff. She actively contributed to the distasteful working environment by her own profane and sexually suggestive conduct.”⁵ She swore, apparently, and participated in conversations about sex. This effectively made her harassment-proof. Many women joke about sex to try to defuse men’s sexual aggression, to try to be one of

the boys in hopes they will be treated like one. This is to discourage sexual advances, not to encourage them. In other cases, judges have understood that “the plaintiffs did not appreciate the remarks and ... many of the other women did not either.”⁶

The extent to which a woman’s job is sexualized is also a factor. If a woman’s work is not to sell sex, and her employer requires her to wear a sexually suggestive uniform, if she is repeatedly sexually harassed by the clientele, she may have a claim against her employer. Similarly, although “there may well be a limited category of jobs (such as adult entertainment) in which sexual harassment may be a rational consequence of such employment,” one court was “simply not prepared to say that a female who goes to work in what is apparently a predominantly male workplace should reasonably expect sexual harassment as part of her job.”⁷ There may be trouble at some point over what jobs are selling sex, given the sexualization of anything a woman does.

Sexual credibility, that strange amalgam of whether your word counts with whether or how much you were hurt, also comes packaged in a variety of technical rules in the sexual harassment cases: evidence, discovery, and burden of proof. In 1982 the EEOC⁸ held that if a victim was sexually harassed without a corroborating witness, proof was inadequate as a matter of law. (Those of you who wonder about the relevance of pornography, get this: if nobody watched, it didn’t happen.) A woman’s word, even if believed, was legally insufficient, even if the man had nothing to put against it other than his word and the plaintiff’s

burden of proof. Much like women who have been raped, women who have experienced sexual harassment say, “But I couldn’t prove it.” They mean they have nothing but their word. Proof is when what you say counts against what someone else says—for which it must first be believed. To say as a matter of law that the woman’s word is per se legally insufficient is to assume that, with sexual violations uniquely, the defendant’s denial is dispositive, is proof. To say a woman’s word is no proof amounts to saying a woman’s word is worthless. Usually all the man has is his denial. In 1983 the EEOC found sexual harassment on a woman’s word alone. It said it was enough, without distinguishing or overruling the prior case. Perhaps they recognized that women don’t choose to be sexually harassed in the presence of witnesses.

The question of prior sexual history is one area in which the issue of sexual credibility is directly posed. Evidence of the defendant’s sexual harassment of other women in the same institutional relation or setting is increasingly being considered admissible, and it should be. The other side of the question is whether evidence of a victim’s prior sexual history should not be. Perpetrators often seek out victims with common qualities or circumstances or - situations—we are fungible⁹ to them so long as we are similarly - accessible—but victims do not seek out victimization at all, and their nonvictimized sexual behavior is no more relevant to an allegation of sexual force than is the perpetrator’s consensual sex life, such as it may be.

So far the leading case, consistent with the direction of rape law, has found that the victim’s sexual history with other individuals is

not relevant, although consensual history with the individual perpetrator may be. With sexual harassment law, we are having to deinstitutionalize sexual misogyny step by step. Some defendants' counsel have even demanded that plaintiffs submit to an unlimited psychiatric examination, which could have a major practical impact on victims' effective access to relief. How much sexual denigration will victims have to face to secure their right to be free from sexual denigration? A major part of the harm of sexual harassment is the public and private sexualization of a woman against her will. Forcing her to speak about her sexuality is a common part of this process, subjection to which leads women to seek relief through the courts. Victims who choose to complain know they will have to endure repeated verbalizations of the specific sexual abuse they complain about. They undertake this even though most experience it as an exacerbation, however unavoidable, of the original abuse. For others, the necessity to repeat over and over the verbal insults, innuendos, and propositions to which they have been subjected leads them to decide that justice is not worth such indignity.

Most victims of sexual harassment, if the incidence data are correct, never file complaints. Many who are viciously violated are so ashamed to make that violation public that they submit in silence, although it devastates their self-respect and often their health, or they leave the job without complaint, although it threatens their survival and that of their families. If, on top of the cost of making the violation known, which is painful enough, they know that the entire range of their sexual experiences, attitudes, preferences, and practices are to be discoverable, few such

actions will be brought, no matter how badly the victims are hurt. Faced with a choice between forced sex in their jobs or schools on the one hand and forced sexual disclosure for the public record on the other, few will choose the latter. This cruel paradox would effectively eliminate much progress in this area.

Part of the power held by perpetrators of sexual harassment is the threat of making the sexual abuse public knowledge.

Put another way, part of the power held by perpetrators of sexual harassment is the threat of making the sexual abuse public knowledge. This functions like blackmail in silencing the victim and allowing the abuse to continue. It is a fact that public knowledge of sexual abuse is often worse for the abused than the abuser, and victims who choose to complain have the courage to take that on. To add to their burden the potential of making public their entire personal life, information that has no relation to the fact or severity of the incidents complained of, is to make the law of this area implicitly complicit in the blackmail that keeps victims from exercising their rights and to enhance the impunity of perpetrators. In effect, it means open season on anyone who does not want her entire intimate life available to public scrutiny. In other contexts such private information has been found intrusive, irrelevant, and more prejudicial than probative. To allow it to be

discovered in the sexual harassment area amounts to a requirement that women be further violated in order to be permitted to seek relief for having been violated. I also will never understand why a violation's severity, or even its likelihood of occurrence, is measured according to the character of the violated, rather than by what was done to them.

In most reported sexual harassment cases, especially rulings on law more than on facts, the trend is almost uniformly favorable to the development of this claim. At least, so far. This almost certainly does not represent social reality. It may not even reflect most cases in litigation. And there may be conflicts building, for example, between those who value speech in the abstract more than they value people in the concrete. Much of sexual harassment is words. Women are called "cunt," "pussy," "tits";¹⁰ they are invited to a company party with "bring your own bathing suits (women, either half)";¹¹ they confront their tormentor in front of their manager with, "You have called me a fucking bitch," only to be answered, "No, I didn't. I called you a fucking cunt."¹² One court issued an injunction against inquiries such as "Did you get any over the weekend?"¹³ One case holds that where "a person in a position to grant or withhold employment opportunities uses that authority to attempt to induce workers and job seekers to submit to sexual advances, prostitution, and pornographic entertainment, and boasts of an ability to intimidate those who displease him," sexual harassment (and intentional infliction of emotional distress) are pleaded. Sexual harassment can also include pictures; visual as well as verbal pornography is commonly used as part of the abuse. Yet one judge found, apparently as a matter of law, that the

pervasive presence of pornography in the workplace did not constitute an unreasonable work environment because, “For better or worse, modern America features open displays of written and pictorial erotica. Shopping centers, candy stores and prime time television regularly display naked bodies and erotic real or simulated sex acts. Living in this milieu, the average American should not be legally offended by sexually explicit posters.”¹⁴ She did not say she was offended, she said she was discriminated against based on her sex. If the pervasiveness of an abuse makes it nonactionable, no inequality sufficiently institutionalized to merit a law against it would be actionable.

Further examples of this internecine conflict have arisen in education. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, pornography used to be shown every year during registration. Is this *not* sexual harassment in education, as a group of women complained it was, because attendance is voluntary, both sexes go, it is screened in groups rather than individually, nobody is directly propositioned, and it is pictures and words? Or is it sexual harassment because the status and treatment of women, supposedly secured from sex-differential harm, are damaged, including that of those who do not attend, which harms individuals and undermines sex equality; therefore pictures and words are the media through which the sex discrimination is accomplished?

For feminist jurisprudence, the sexual harassment attempt suggests that if a legal initiative is set up right from the beginning, meaning if it is designed from women’s real experience of violation, it can make some difference. To a degree women’s

experience can be written into law, even in some tension with the current doctrinal framework. Women who want to resist their victimization with legal terms that imagine it is not inevitable can be given some chance, which is more than they had before. Law is not everything in this respect, but it is not nothing either. Perhaps the most important lesson is that the mountain can be moved. When we started, there was absolutely no judicial precedent for allowing a sex discrimination suit for sexual harassment. Sometimes even the law does something for the first time.

■ ■ ■ ■ QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. How would you define sexual harassment? Is it a gender offense?
2. Is pornography a form of sexual harassment? Are “sexually oriented drawings” in the workplace and abusive terms such as “slut” ([para. 18](#)) examples of sexual harassment?
3. Why is it difficult to get “recoveries for women who have actually been sexually violated” ([para. 21](#))?
4. Do you agree that “the sexual politics of the situation is that men do not see a woman who has had sex as victimized, whatever the conditions” ([para. 21](#))?
5. Is it still true that women are “publicly sexually humiliated by the legal system” when they bring charges of harassment or rape ([para. 24](#))?
6. How relevant is “the question of prior sexual history” to charges of harassment or rape ([paras. 29](#) and [30](#))? Is it equally relevant to both genders?
7. MacKinnon ends by expressing positive feelings about “women’s real experience” being “written into law, even in some tension with the

current doctrinal framework” ([para. 35](#)). What does she mean by “current doctrinal framework”?

■ ■ ■ SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. What examples of sexual harassment have you witnessed either in the workplace or in education? What forms does sexual harassment take? How serious is it, and under what conditions do you feel charges should be brought in a court of law?
2. Do you have any reservations concerning MacKinnon’s arguments? Do you feel there are circumstances or situations that she has not adequately considered that would cast new light on sexual harassment charges? Is there a fundamental social difference between genders that might make their perception of harassment quite different? Are there legitimate biological differences that should be considered?
3. Defend or attack MacKinnon’s contention that sexual harassment is a male form of political discrimination. Is harassment a tool of oppression used by men in an effort to keep women in a subservient position in the workplace?
4. Is MacKinnon justified in saying, “I also will never understand why a violation’s severity, or even its likelihood of occurrence, is measured according to the character of the violated, rather than by what was done to them” ([para. 32](#))? Consider this statement in connection with a variety of other criminal violations, for example, murder, rape, robbery, or assault. Is it uniformly true that the violated person’s character should have nothing to do with a decision about the fate of the violator?
5. Sexual harassment claims often make it into national news. Research the most important examples of sexual harassment claims and how they were dealt with either in court or in public hearings. How much of what MacKinnon says about the likely outcome of these judgments or their reception either in the press or locally was validated by events?

What is the view of your peers about sexual harassment? Does MacKinnon represent the position of your peers?

■ ■ CONNECTIONS

1. To what extent do the experiences of Frederick Douglass ([From *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*](#)) parallel the experiences of women who are victims of sexual harassment? Is the treatment of African American slaves similar to the treatment described by the female plaintiffs referred to in MacKinnon's essay? To what extent are the circumstances of the two groups parallel?
2. What are the differences and similarities between MacKinnon's and Mary Wollstonecraft's approaches to the condition of women? Does Wollstonecraft take the charge of political oppression any less seriously than does MacKinnon? Would Wollstonecraft agree with MacKinnon about the seriousness of sexual harassment?



Judith Butler From *Undoing Gender*



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JUDITH BUTLER (b. 1956) is Maxine Eliot Professor of Rhetoric and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley. Currently, she is a visiting professor at Columbia University in New York City. She was originally trained in philosophy, and much of her work has been wide-ranging, considering gender studies and political and psychoanalytic

issues, as well as concerns for how language shapes our understanding not just of the world but of ourselves.

Her work is often theoretical and influenced by the modern European theoreticians described as post-structuralists. As a result, her writing has been criticized for being too indirect, abstract, and obscure. However, her book *Undoing Gender* (2004), from which the following selection is taken, is written in a style marked by clarity and directness, unlike many of her articles and other books. She has done a great deal of work focused on gender identity and on the nature of sexuality and argues that both are largely the result of socialization and the force of language in our society. She admits that this idea seems inherently contrary to common sense, but it is for that very reason that she asks us to listen closely to her reasoning. Given the power of language to shape ideas, and given the fluidity of the concept of gender, her argument is taken very seriously by psychologists and philosophers concerned with how individuals view their own nature.

Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990) was an immediately influential book, its powerful critique of the feminist movement resounding with both academic and popular audiences alike. In it, Butler argues against a “binary view of gender,” or a view that limits the definition of gender to a male body and a female body. Butler’s argument is that gender is flexible, a continuum from one pole to another of desire. Feminism in 1990, she felt, limited itself to two absolute categories—women and men—with the subsequent view that the focus of sexual

desire was also limited to one of these two categories. However, as a lesbian herself and a researcher into gender issues, she knew that desire takes many forms and that feminists holding to their binary view limited the movement as well as themselves. If feminists rejected the doctrine that biology is destiny on the basis of a male–female model, then it was necessary for them to explore their views of the nature of biology and the demands of society with more vigor.

Current research has shown that rigid categories of sexuality have been impossible to maintain. Transgender operations have proliferated enough that public figures have had national recognition in their efforts to change their perceived gender status. Queer studies has become a valid academic discipline in many major universities, especially now that efforts have been made to remove any stigma from homosexual and lesbian lifestyles. Same-sex marriage has become, if not common, more greatly recognized by state laws. Butler has been in the forefront of trying to change society’s awareness of how limitations in attitudes affect the perceptions of all of us.

BUTLER’S RHETORIC

As a professor of rhetoric, Butler is deeply concerned with the ways in which language defines people and things. She points out that in some cases it is only through language that we understand the nature of reality—and at that, we cannot trust language to give us the complete truth about things. As a result of her concerns for language, she uses it very carefully and performs complex

analyses at crucial points in her argument to guarantee us as clear a sense of understanding as possible.

The opening pages of her selection establish the general circumstances that she is interested in treating. She explains that she will focus on the human, on “the conditions of intelligibility by which the human emerges” ([para. 1](#)). She points to her subjects as “human love,” “norms,” and “ways of knowing, modes of truth, that forcibly define intelligibility.” Her point is that there may be ways of understanding norms and what it is to be human by a careful consideration of what is said and that what we say stands for the truth about humanity.

Once she has established her focus, she introduces us to a narrative of great interest and some complexity. She tells us the case story of David Reimer, a boy who accidentally had his penis burned and subsequently amputated at the age of eight months. The accident was the result of a doctor’s mismanagement of an electrocautery needle that he was unfamiliar with. What should have been a risk-free operation totally changed David. His parents, hoping to find a way for him to have a heterosexual life, took him to Dr. John Money at Johns Hopkins University to consult about what should be done. Money was famous for his sex transformation cases involving infants with anomalous sexual organs (often described as hermaphrodites). Money convinced the parents that David could be raised as a girl with great success. He explained that socialization, along with hormones, would establish gender and that David, renamed Brenda, would grow up as a girl and achieve a sense of female identity and feel

normal. Money had a reputation for success in cases similar to this, and Brenda was raised as a girl never knowing about the medical mutilation during his infancy.

But the story was complicated by several things. One was that Brenda, as the subject of Dr. Money's scientific studies, was being studied by others to see how the gender change was working: she was frequently asked to disrobe and was examined by other doctors; she was questioned routinely about her feelings and her progress. Brenda became a medical subject and therefore did not experience what others might have considered a normal upbringing. By age two, Brenda began to show signs of gender-assignment discomfort, rejecting clothes chosen for her and choosing what were thought to be inappropriate toys, such as machine guns. Ultimately, Brenda rejected her female assignment and, at age fourteen, became David once again. He underwent another surgery to return himself to something close to the physical male norm.

Butler comments on all the phases of this narrative and ends her essay with a detailed analysis of the narrative that she presents of David's development. She also analyzes David's own account of his circumstances as it is told in the literature. The story has subtleties that Butler unravels in her quest to answer certain questions about what she calls "gender essentialism" and the relationship of gender and gender assignments to the body itself. The question of what constitutes a norm is also central to her interests in understanding the significance of David's experiences moving from gender to gender. Butler's analysis is detailed and

thorough, but she admits that there are many aspects of this case that cannot be easily understood, especially by examining the narratives in which the case is presented. As readers of her narrative and her analysis, we are brought to an understanding of our own limitations in the face of narratives that limit our intelligence of what really happened. That is a major part of Butler's central point. Language comes between us and the reality, but that does not prevent us from trying to understand David's experiences.

Unfortunately, while Butler was preparing her book for press, David Reimer killed himself. Butler appends that information in a postscript at the end of the selection, but there is much more to the story that should be known. For example, David's was the first experiment by John Money on a child not born a hermaphrodite or with indeterminate genitals. Moreover, David was never told he was born a boy until he was fourteen years old. Once he was told, he said he knew why he had the feelings he had had when he was young and that now he did not feel like a freak. He had his breasts removed and then insisted on being given the FTM (female-to-male) surgery that restored him to his original gender. John Colapinto, who wrote a best-selling book about David, was not entirely surprised that David killed himself. Colapinto said that David had been taunted relentlessly as a child and that those experiences haunted him. In addition, his mother and brother had been clinically depressed. His twin brother Brian overdosed on antidepressants two years before David took his own life at the age of thirty-eight.

Butler focuses on David as an example of someone who struggled with gender issues while in the care of doctors who held to fundamental decisions regarding the truth about gender and what it should look like. Butler makes us aware that such decisions are not easily reached nor are they easily defended.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of this excerpt from Judith Butler's *Undoing Gender*. Keeping them in mind during your first reading should help focus your attention.

1. What is the relation of gender to personhood?
2. Is there an essential gender core (see [para. 9](#))?
3. What was David Reimer's experience with gender reassignment?

From *Undoing Gender*

I would like to take my point of departure from a question of power, the power of regulation, a power that determines, more or less, what we are, what we can be. I am not speaking of power only in a juridical or positive sense, but I am referring to the workings of a certain regulatory regime, one that informs the law, and also exceeds the law. When we ask, what are the conditions of intelligibility by which the human emerges, by which the human is recognized, by which some subject becomes the subject of human love, we are asking about conditions of intelligibility composed of norms, of practices, that have become presuppositional, without which we cannot think the human at all. So I propose to broach the relationship between variable orders of intelligibility and the genesis and knowability of the human. And it is not just that there are laws that govern our intelligibility, but ways of knowing, modes of truth, that forcibly define intelligibility.

This is what Foucault¹ describes as the politics of truth, a politics that pertains to those relations of power that circumscribe in advance what will and will not count as truth, which order the world in certain regular and regulatable ways, and which we come to accept as the given field of knowledge. We can understand the salience of this point when we begin to ask: What counts as a person? What counts as a coherent gender? What qualifies as a citizen? Whose world is legitimated as real? Subjectively, we ask: Who can I become in such a world where the meanings and limits of the subject are set out in advance for me? By what norms am I

constrained as I begin to ask what I may become? And what happens when I begin to become that for which there is no place within the given regime of truth? This is what Foucault describes as “the desubjugation of the subject in the play of... the politics of truth.”

Justice is not only or exclusively a matter of how persons are treated or how societies are constituted. It also concerns consequential decisions about what a person is, and what social norms must be honored and expressed for “personhood” to become allocated.

Another way of putting this is the following: “What, given the contemporary order of being, can I be?” This question does not quite broach the question of what it is not to be, or what it is to occupy the place of not-being within the field of being. What it is to live, breathe, attempt to love neither as fully negated nor as fully acknowledged as being. This relationship, between intelligibility and the human, is an urgent one; it carries a certain theoretical urgency, precisely at those points where the human is encountered at the limits of intelligibility itself. I would like to suggest that this interrogation has something important to do with justice. Justice is not only or exclusively a matter of how persons

are treated or how societies are constituted. It also concerns consequential decisions about what a person is, and what social norms must be honored and expressed for “personhood” to become allocated, how we do or do not recognize animate others as persons depending on whether or not we recognize a certain norm manifested in and by the body of that other. The very criterion by which we judge a person to be a gendered being, a criterion that posits coherent gender as a presupposition of humanness, is not only one which, justly or unjustly, governs the recognizability of the human, but one that informs the ways we do or do not recognize ourselves at the level of feeling, desire, and the body, at the moments before the mirror, in the moments before the window, in the times that one turns to psychologists, to psychiatrists, to medical and legal professionals to negotiate what may well feel like the unrecognizability of one’s gender and, hence, the unrecognizability of one’s personhood.

I want to consider a legal and psychiatric case of a person who was determined without difficulty to be a boy at the time of birth, then determined again within a few months to be a girl, who decided in his teenage years to become a man. This is the story of David Reimer, whose situation is referred to as “the Joan/John case,” one that was brought to public attention by the BBC and in various popular, psychological, and medical journals. I base my analysis on several documents: an article written by Dr. Milton Diamond, an endocrinologist, and the popular book *As Nature Made Him*, written by John Colapinto, a journalist for *Rolling Stone*, as well as several publications by John Money, and critical commentaries offered by Anne Fausto-Sterling and Suzanne

Kessler in their important recent books.² David Reimer has now talked openly to the media and has chosen to live outside the pseudonym reserved for him by Milton Diamond and his colleagues. David became “Brenda” at a certain point in his childhood which I discuss below, and so instead of referring to him as Joan and John, neither of which is his name, I will use the name he uses.

David was born with XY chromosomes and at the age of eight months, his penis was accidentally burned and severed in the course of a surgical operation to rectify phimosis, a condition in which the foreskin thwarts urination. This is a relatively risk-free procedure, but the doctor who performed it on David was using a new machine, apparently one that he hadn't used before, one that his colleagues declared was unnecessary for the job. He had trouble making the machine work, so he increased the power to the machine to the point that it effectively burned away a major portion of the penis. The parents were, of course, appalled and shocked, and they were, according to their own description, unclear how to proceed. Then one evening, about a year after this event, they were watching television, and there they encountered John Money, talking about transsexual and intersexual surgery, offering the view that if a child underwent surgery and started socialization as a gender different from the one originally assigned at birth, the child could develop normally, adapt perfectly well to the new gender, and live a happy life. The parents wrote to Money and he invited them to Baltimore, and so David was subsequently seen at Johns Hopkins University, at which point the strong recommendation was made by Dr. John Money that David be

raised as a girl. The parents agreed, and the doctors removed the testicles, made some preliminary preparation for surgery to create a vagina, but decided to wait until Brenda, the newly named child, was older to complete the task. So Brenda grew up as a girl, and was monitored often, given over on a periodic basis to John Money's Gender Identity Institute for the purposes of fostering adaptation to being a girl. Then between the ages of eight and nine, Brenda found herself developing the desire to buy a toy machine gun. Between the ages of nine and eleven, she started to make the realization that she was not a girl. This realization seems to coincide with the desire to buy certain kinds of toys: more guns, apparently, and some trucks. Although there was no penis, Brenda liked to stand to urinate. And she was caught in this position once, at school, and the other girls threatened to "kill" her if she continued.

At this point, the psychiatric teams that were intermittently monitoring Brenda's adaptation offered her estrogen, and she refused this. Money tried to talk to her about getting a real vagina, and she refused; in fact, she went screaming from the room. Money had her view sexually graphic pictures of vaginas. Money even went so far as to show Brenda pictures of women giving birth, holding out the promise that Brenda might be able to give birth if she acquired a vagina. And in a scene that could have been the model for the recent film *But I'm a Cheerleader!* she and her brother were required to perform mock coital exercises with one another, on command. They both later reported being very frightened and disoriented by this demand and did not tell their parents at the time. Brenda is said to have preferred male

activities and not to have liked developing breasts. And all of these attributions to Brenda are made by another set of doctors, this time a team of psychiatrists at Brenda's local hospital. The local psychiatrists and medical professionals intervened in the case, believing that a mistake had been made in sex reassignment here, and eventually the case was reviewed by Milton Diamond, a sex researcher who believes in the hormonal basis of gender identity and who has been battling Money for several years. This new set of psychiatrists and doctors offered her the choice of changing paths, which she accepted. She started living as a boy, named David, at the age of fourteen. At this point, David started requesting, and receiving, male hormone shots, and also had his breasts removed. A phallus, so it was called by Diamond, was constructed for him between the age of fifteen and sixteen. David, it is reported, does not ejaculate, although he feels some sexual pleasure there; he urinates from its base. It is a phallus that only approximates some of its expected functions and, as we shall see, enters David only ambivalently into the norm.

During the time that David was Brenda, Money continued to publish papers extolling the success of this sex reassignment case. The case was enormously consequential because Brenda had a brother for an identical twin, and so Money could track the development of both siblings and assume an identical genetic makeup for both of them. He insisted that both were developing normally and happily into their different genders. But his own recorded interviews, mainly unpublished, and subsequent research, have called his honesty into question. Brenda was

hardly happy, refused to adapt to many so-called girl behaviors, and was appalled and angered by Money's invasive and constant interrogations. And yet, the published records from Johns Hopkins claim that Brenda's adaptation to girlhood was "successful," and immediately certain ideological conclusions followed. John Money's Gender Identity Clinic, which monitored Brenda often, concluded that Brenda's successful development as a girl "offers convincing evidence that the gender identity gate is open at birth for a normal child no less than for one born with unfinished sex organs or one who was prenatally over or underexposed to androgen, and that it stays open at least for something over a year at birth." Indeed, the case was used by the public media to make the case that what is feminine and what is masculine can be altered, that these cultural terms have no fixed meaning or internal destiny, and that they are more malleable than previously thought. Even Kate Millett³ cited the case in making the argument that biology is not destiny. And Suzanne Kessler also cowrote with Money essays in favor of the social constructionist thesis. Later Kessler would disavow the alliance and write one of the most important books on the ethical and medical dimensions of sex assignment, *Lessons from the Intersexed*, which includes a trenchant critique of Money himself.

Money's approach to Brenda was to recruit male to female transsexuals to talk to Brenda about the advantages of being a girl. Brenda was subjected to myriad interviews, asked again and again whether she felt like a girl, what her desires were, what her image of the future was, whether it included marriage to a man. Brenda was also asked to strip and show her genitals to medical

practitioners who were either interested in the case or monitoring the case for its adaptational success.

When this case was discussed in the press, and when psychiatrists and medical practitioners have referred to it, they have done so in order to criticize the role that John Money's institute played in the case and, in particular, how quickly that institute sought to use Brenda as an example of its own theoretical beliefs, beliefs about the gender neutrality of early childhood, about the malleability of gender, of the primary role of socialization in the production of gender identity. In fact, this is not exactly everything that Money believes, but I will not probe that question here. Those who have become critical of this case believe that it shows us something very different. When we consider, they argue, that David found himself deeply moved to become a boy, and found it unbearable to continue to live as a girl, we have to consider as well that there was some deep-seated sense of gender that David experienced, one that is linked to his original set of genitals, one that seems to be there, as an internal truth and necessity, which no amount of socialization could reverse. This is the view of Colapinto and of Milton Diamond as well. So now the case of Brenda/David is being used to make a revision and reversal in developmental gender theory, providing evidence this time for the reversal of Money's thesis, supporting the notion of an essential gender core, one that is tied in some irreversible way to anatomy and to a deterministic sense of biology. Indeed, Colapinto clearly links Money's cruelty to Brenda to the "cruelty" of social construction as a theory, remarking that Money's refusal to identify a biological or anatomical basis for

gender difference in the early 1970s “was not lost on the then--burgeoning women’s movement, which had been arguing against a biological basis for sex differences for decades.” He claims that Money’s published essays “had already been used as one of the main foundations of modern feminism.” He quotes *Time* magazine as engaging in a similarly misguided appropriation of Money’s views when they argued that this case “provides strong support for a major contention of women’s liberationists: that conventional patterns of masculine and feminine behavior can be altered....” Indeed, Colapinto proceeds to talk about the failure of surgically reassigned individuals to live as “normal” and “typical” women or men, arguing that normality is never achieved and, hence, assuming throughout the inarguable value of normalcy itself.

When Natalie Angier⁴ reported on the refutation of Money’s theory in the *New York Times* (14 March 1997), she claimed that the story of David had “the force of allegory.” But which force was that? And is this an allegory with closure? In that article, Angier reports that Diamond used the case to make an argument about intersexual surgery and, by implication, the relative success of transsexual surgery. Diamond argued, for instance, that intersexed infants, that is, those born with mixed genital attributes, generally have a Y chromosome, and the possession of the Y is an adequate basis for concluding that the child ought to be raised as a boy. As it is, the vast majority of intersexed infants are subjected to surgery that seeks to assign them to a female sex, since, as Cheryl Chase, points out, it is simply considered easier to produce a provisional vaginal tract than it is to construct a phallus. Diamond argues that these children should be assigned

to the male sex, since the presence of the Y is sufficient grounds for the presumption of social masculinity.

Gender is a different sort of identity, and its relation to anatomy is complex.

In fact, Chase, the founder and director of the Intersexed Society of North America, voiced skepticism about Diamond's recommendations. Her view, defended by Anne Fausto-Sterling as well, is that although a child should be given a sex assignment for the purposes of establishing a stable social identity, it does not follow that society should engage in coercive surgery to remake the body in the social image of that gender. Such efforts at "correction" not only violate the child but lend support to the idea that gender has to be borne out in singular and normative ways at the level of anatomy. Gender is a different sort of identity, and its relation to anatomy is complex. According to Chase, a child upon maturing may choose to change genders or, indeed, elect for hormonal or surgical intervention, but such decisions are justified because they are based on knowing choice. Indeed, research has shown that such surgical operations have been performed without parents knowing, that such surgical operations have been performed without the children themselves ever having been truthfully told, and without waiting until the child is old enough to offer his or her consent. Most astonishing, in a way, is the mutilated state that these bodies are left in, mutilations performed and then paradoxically rationalized in the name of "looking

normal,” the rationale used by medical practitioners to justify these surgeries. They often say to parents that the child will not look normal, that the child will be ashamed in the locker room, the locker room, that site of prepubescent anxiety about impending gender developments, and that it would be better for the child to look normal, even when such surgery may deprive the person permanently of sexual function and pleasure. So, as some experts, such as Money, claim that the absence of the full phallus makes the social case for rearing the child as a girl, others such as Diamond argue that the presence of the Y is the most compelling evidence, that it is what is being indexed in persistent feelings of masculinity, and that it cannot be constructed away.

Thus, in the one case, how anatomy looks, how it appears to others, and to myself, as I see others looking at me—this is the basis of a social identity as woman or man. In the other case, how the genetic presence of the “Y” works in tacit ways to structure feeling and self-understanding as a sexed person is the basis. Money thus argues for the ease with which a female body can be surgically constructed, as if femininity was always little more or less than a surgical construction, an elimination, a cutting away. Diamond argues for the invisible and necessary persistence of maleness, one that does not need to “appear” in order to operate as the key feature of gender identity itself. When Angier asks Chase whether she agrees with Diamond’s recommendations on intersexual surgery, Chase replies: “They can’t conceive of leaving someone alone.” Indeed, is the surgery performed in order to create a “normal-looking” body after all? The mutilations and scars that remain hardly offer compelling evidence that this is what the

surgeries actually accomplish. Or are these bodies, precisely because they are “inconceivable,” subjected to medical machinery that marks them for life?

Another paradox emerges here—one that I hope to write about further on another occasion—namely, the place of sharp machines, of the technology of the knife, in debates on intersexuality and transsexuality alike. If the David/Brenda case is an allegory, or has the force of allegory, it seems to be the site where debates on intersexuality (David is not an intersexual) and transsexuality (David is not a transsexual) converge. This body becomes a point of reference for a narrative that is not about this body, but which seizes upon the body, as it were, in order to inaugurate a narrative that interrogates the limits of the conceivably human. What is inconceivable is conceived again and again, through narrative means, but something remains outside the narrative, a resistant moment that signals a persisting inconceivability.

Despite Diamond’s recommendations, the intersex movement has been galvanized by the Brenda/David case, able now to bring to public attention the brutality, coerciveness, and lasting harm of the unwanted surgeries performed on intersexed infants. The point is to try to imagine a world in which individuals with mixed genital attributes might be accepted and loved without having to transform them into a more socially coherent or normative version of gender. In this sense, the intersex movement has sought to question why society maintains the ideal of gender dimorphism⁵ when a significant percentage of children are chromosomally

various, and a continuum exists between male and female that suggests the arbitrariness and falsity of the gender dimorphism as a prerequisite of human development. There are humans, in other words, who live and breathe in the interstices of this binary relation, showing that it is not exhaustive; it is not necessary. Although the transsexual movement, which is internally various, has called for rights to surgical means by which sex might be transformed, it is also clear—and Chase underscores this—that there is also a serious and increasingly popular critique of idealized gender dimorphism within the transsexuality movement itself. One can see it in the work of Riki Wilchins,⁶ whose gender theory makes room for transsexuality as a transformative exercise, but one can see it perhaps most dramatically in Kate Bornstein, who argues that to go from F to M, or from M to F, is not necessarily to stay within the binary frame of gender, but to engage transformation itself as the meaning of gender. In some ways, it is Kate Bornstein who is now carrying the legacy of Simone de Beauvoir:⁷ if one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one, then becoming is the vehicle for gender itself. But why, we might ask, has David become the occasion for a reflection on transsexuality?

Although David comes to claim that he would prefer to be a man, it is not clear whether David himself believes in the primary causal force of the Y chromosome. Diamond finds support for his theory in David, but it is not clear that David agrees with Diamond. David clearly knows about the world of hormones, asked for them and takes them. David has learned about phallic construction from transsexual contexts, wants a phallus, has it made, and so

allegorizes a certain transsexual transformation without precisely exemplifying it. He is, in his view, a man born a man, castrated by the medical establishment, feminized by the psychiatric world, and then enabled to return to who he is. But in order to return to who he is, he requires—and wants, and gets—a subjection to hormones and surgery. He allegorizes transsexuality in order to achieve a sense of naturalness. And this transformation is applauded by the endocrinologists on the case since they understand his appearance now to be in accord with an inner truth. Whereas the Money Institute enlists transsexuals to instruct Brenda in the ways of women, and *in the name of normalization*, the endocrinologists prescribe the sex change protocol of transsexuality to David for him to reassume his genetic destiny, *in the name of nature*.

And though the Money Institute enlists transsexuals to allegorize - Brenda's full transformation into a woman, the endocrinologists propose to appropriate transsexual surgery in order to build the phallus that will make David a more legible man. Importantly, it seems, the norms [that] govern intelligible gender for Money are those that can be forcibly imposed and behaviorally appropriated, so the malleability of gender construction, which is part of his thesis, turns out to require a forceful application. And the "nature" that the endocrinologists defend also needs a certain assistance through surgical and hormonal means, at which point a certain nonnatural intervention in anatomy and biology is precisely what is mandated by nature. So in each case, the primary premise is in some ways refuted by the means by which it is implemented. *Malleability is, as it were, violently imposed. And naturalness is*

artificially induced. There are ways of arguing social construction that have nothing to do with Money's project, but that is not my aim here. And there are no doubt ways of seeking recourse to genetic determinants that do not lead to the same kind of interventionist conclusions that are arrived at by Diamond and Sigmundsen. But that is also not precisely my point. For the record, though, the prescriptions arrived at by these purveyors of natural and normative gender in no way follow necessarily from the premises from which they begin, and that the premises with which they begin have no necessity of itself. (One might well disjoin the theory of gender construction, for instance, from the hypothesis of gender normativity and have a very different account of social construction than that offered by Money; one might allow from genetic factors without assuming that they are the only aspect of "nature" that one might consult to understand the sexed characteristics of a human: Why is the "Y" considered the exclusive and primary determinant of maleness, exercising preemptive rights over any and all other factors?)

But my point in recounting this story to you and its appropriation for the purposes of gender theory is to suggest that the story as we have it does not actually supply evidence for either thesis, and to suggest that there may be another way of reading this story, one that neither confirms nor denies the theory of social construction, one that neither affirms nor denies gender essentialism. Indeed, what I hope to underscore here is the disciplinary framework within which Brenda/David develops a discourse of self-reporting and self-understanding, since it constitutes the grid of intelligibility by which his own humanness is

both questioned and asserted. It seems crucial to remember, as one considers what might count as the evidence of the truth of gender, that Brenda/David was intensely monitored by psychological teams through childhood and adolescence, that teams of doctors observed her behavior, that teams of doctors asked her and her brother to disrobe in front of them so that genital development could be gauged, that there was the doctor who asked her to engage in mock coital exercises with her brother, to view the pictures, to know and want the so-called normalcy of unambiguous genitalia. There was an apparatus of knowledge applied to the person and body of Brenda/David that is rarely, if ever, taken into account as part of what David is responding to when he reports on his feelings of true gender.

The act of self-reporting and the act of self-observation take place in relation to a certain audience, with a certain audience as the imagined recipient, before a certain audience for whom a verbal and visual picture of selfhood is being produced. These are speech acts that are very often delivered to those who have been scrutinizing, brutally, the truth of Brenda's gender for years. And even though Diamond and Sigmundsen and even Colapinto are in the position of defending David against Money's various intrusions, they are still asking David how he feels and who he is, trying to ascertain the truth of his sex through the discourse he provides. Because Brenda was subjected to such scrutiny and, most importantly, constantly and repeatedly subjected to a norm, a normalizing ideal that was conveyed through a plurality of gazes, a norm applied to the body, a question is constantly posed: Is this person feminine enough? Has this person made it to femininity? Is

femininity being properly embodied here? Is the embodiment working? What evidence can be marshalled in order to know? And surely we must have knowledge here. We must be able to say that we know, and to communicate that in the professional journals, and justify our decision, our act. In other words, these exercises interrogate whether the gender norm that establishes coherent personhood has been successfully accomplished. The inquiries and inspections can be understood, along these lines, as the violent attempt to implement the norm, and the institutionalization of that power of implementation.

The pediatricians and psychiatrists who have revisited the case in recent years cite David's own self-description to support their point. David's narrative about his own sense of being male that supports the theory that David is really male, and that he was, even when he was Brenda, always male.

David tells his interviewers the following about himself:

There were little things from early on. I began to see how different I felt and was, from what I was supposed to be. But I didn't know what it meant. I thought I was a freak or something... I looked at myself and said I don't like this type of clothing, I don't like the types of toys I was always being given. I like hanging around with the guys and climbing trees and stuff like that and girls don't like any of that stuff. I looked in the mirror and [saw] my shoulders [were] so wide, I mean there [was] nothing feminine about me. I [was] skinny, but other than that, nothing. But that [was] how I figured it out. [I figured I was a guy] but didn't want to admit it. I figured I didn't want to wind up opening a can of worms.

So now you read how David describes himself. And so, if part of my task here is to do justice, not only to my topic, but to the person I am sketching for you, the person around whom so much has been said, the person whose self-description and whose decisions have become the basis for so much gender theorizing, I must be careful in presenting these words. For these words can give you only something of the person I am trying to understand, some part of that person's verbal instance. Since I cannot truly understand this person, since I do not know this person, and have no access to this person, I am left to be a reader of a selected number of words, words that I did not fully select, ones that were selected for me, recorded from interviews and then chosen by those who decided to write their articles on this person for journals such as the *Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine*. So we might say that I am given fragments of the person, linguistic fragments of something called a person; what might it mean to do justice to someone under these circumstances? Can we?

On the one hand, we have a self-description, and that is to be honored. These are the words by which this individual gives himself to be understood. On the other hand, we have a description of a self that takes place in a language that is already going on, that is already saturated with norms, that predisposes us as we seek to speak of ourselves. Moreover, we have words that are delivered in the context of an interview, an interview which is part of the long and intrusive observational process that has accompanied Brenda's formation from the start. To do justice to David is, certainly, to take him at his word, and to call him by his chosen name, but how are we to understand his word and his

name? Is this the word that he creates? Is this the word that he receives? Are these the words that circulate prior to his emergence as an “I” who might only gain a certain authorization to begin a self-description within the norms of this language? So that when one speaks, one speaks a language that is already speaking, even if one speaks it in a way that is not precisely how it has been spoken before. So what and who is speaking here, when David reports: “There were little things from early on. I began to see how different I felt and was, from what I was supposed to be.”

This claim tells us minimally that David understands that there is a norm, a norm of how he was supposed to be, and that he has fallen short of the norm. The implicit claim here is that the norm is femininity, and he has failed to live up to that norm. And there is the norm, and it is externally imposed, communicated through a set of expectations that others have; and then there is the world of feeling and being, and these realms are, for him, distinct. What he feels is not in any way produced by the norm, and the norm is other, elsewhere, not part of who he is, who he has become, what he feels.

But given what we know about how David has been addressed, I might, in an effort to do justice to David, ask, what did Brenda see as Brenda looks at himself, feels as he feels himself, and please excuse my mixing of pronouns here, but matters are becoming changeable. When Brenda looks in the mirror and sees something nameless, freakish, something between the norms, is she not at that moment in question as a human, is she not the spectre of the

freak against which and through which the norm installs itself? What is the problem with Brenda such that people are always asking to see her naked, asking her questions about what she is, how she feels, whether this is or is not the same as what is normatively true? Is that self-seeing distinct from the way s/he is seen? He seems clear that the norms are external to him, but what if the norms have become the means by which he sees, the frame for his own seeing, his way of seeing himself? What if the action of the norm is to be found not merely in the ideal that it posits, but in the sense of aberration and of freakishness that it conveys? Consider where precisely the norm operates when David claims, "I looked at myself and said I don't like this type of clothing." To whom is David speaking? And in what world, under what conditions, does not liking that type of clothing provide evidence for being the wrong gender? For whom would that be true? And under what conditions?

Brenda reports, "I didn't like the toys I was being given," and Brenda is speaking here as someone who understands that such a dislike can function as evidence. And it seems reasonable to assume that the reason Brenda understands this "dislike" as evidence of gender dystopia, to use the technical term, is that Brenda has been addressed time and again by those who make use of every utterance that Brenda makes about her experience as evidence for or against a true gender. That Brenda happens not to like certain toys, certain dolls, certain games, may be significant in relation to the question of how and with what Brenda likes to play. But in what world, precisely, do such dislikes count as clear or unequivocal evidence for or against being a given

gender? Do parents regularly rush off to gender identity clinics when their boys play with yarn, or their girls play with trucks? Or must there already be a rather enormous anxiety at play, an anxiety about the truth of gender which seizes on this or that toy, this or that proclivity of dress, the size of the shoulder, the leanness of the body, to conclude that something like a clear gender identity can or cannot be built from these scattered desires, these variable and invariable features of the body, of bone structure, of proclivity, of attire?

So what does my analysis imply? Does it tell us whether the gender here is true or false? No. And does this have implications for whether David should have been surgically transformed into Brenda, or Brenda surgically transformed into David? No, it does not. I do not know how to judge that question here, and I am not sure it can be mine to judge. Does justice demand that I decide? Or does justice demand that I wait to decide, that I practice a certain deferral in the face of a situation in which too many have rushed to judgment? Might it not be useful, important, even just, to consider a few matters before we decide, before we ascertain whether it is, in fact, ours to decide?

Consider in this spirit, then, that it is for the most part the gender essentialist position that must be voiced for transsexual surgery to take place, and that someone who comes in with a sense of the gender as changeable will have a more difficult time convincing psychiatrists and doctors to perform the surgery. In San Francisco, FTM⁸ candidates actually practice the narrative of gender essentialism that they are required to perform before they go in to

see the doctors, and there are now coaches to help them, dramaturgs⁹ of transsexuality who will help you make the case for no fee. Indeed, we might say that Brenda/David together went through two transsexual surgeries: the first based on a hypothetical argument about what gender should be, given the ablated¹⁰ nature of the penis; the second based on what the gender should be, based on the behavioral and verbal indications of the person in question. In both cases, certain inferences are made, ones that suggest that a body must be a certain way for a gender to work, another which says that a body must feel a certain way for a gender to work. David clearly came to disrespect and abhor the views of the first set of doctors and developed, we might say, a lay critique of the phallus to support his resistance:

Doctor said “it’s gonna be tough, you’re gonna be picked on, you’re gonna be very alone, you’re not gonna find anybody (unless you have vaginal surgery and live as a female).” And I thought to myself, you know I wasn’t very old at the time, but it dawned on me that these people gotta be pretty shallow if that’s the only thing they think I’ve got going for me; that the only reason why people get married and have children and have a productive life is because of what they have between their legs.... If that’s all they think of me, that they justify my worth by what I have between my legs, then I gotta be a complete loser.

Here David makes a distinction between the “I” that he is, the person that he is, and the value that is conferred upon his personhood by virtue of what is or is not between his legs. He was wagering that he will be loved for something other than this or, at least, that his penis will not be the reason he is loved. He was holding out, implicitly, for something called “depth” over and against the “shallowness” of the doctors. And so although David

asked for and received his new status as male, has asked for and received his new phallus, he is also something other than what he now has, and though he has undergone this transformation, he refuses to be reduced to the body part that he has acquired. "If that's all they think of me," he begins his sentence, offering a knowing and critical rejoinder to the work of the norm. There is something of me that exceeds this part, though I want this part, though it is part of me. He does not want his "worth justified" by what he has between his legs, and what this means is that he has another sense of how the worth of the person might be justified. So we might say that he is living his desire, acquiring the anatomy that he wants in order to live his desire, but that his desire is complex, and his worth is complex. And this is why, no doubt, in response to many of the questions that Money posed: Do you want to have a penis? Do you want to marry a girl? David often refused to answer the question, refused to stay in the room where Money was, refused to visit Baltimore at all after a while.

David does not trade in one gender norm for another, not exactly. It would be as wrong to say that he has simply internalized a gendered norm (from a critical position) as it would be to say that he has failed to live up to a gendered norm (from a normalizing, medical position), since he has already established that what will justify his worth will be the invocation of an "I" which is not reducible to the compatibility of his anatomy with the norm. He thinks something more of himself than what others think, he does not fully justify his worth through recourse to what he has between his legs, and he does not think of himself as a complete loser. Something exceeds the norm, and he recognizes its

unrecognizability. It is, in a sense, his distance from the knowably human that operates as a condition of critical speech, the source of his worth, as the justification for his worth. He says that if what those doctors believe were true, he would be a complete loser, and he implies that he is not a complete loser, that something in him is winning.

But he is also saying something more—he is cautioning us against the absolutism of distinction itself, for his phallus does not constitute the entirety of his worth. There is an incommensurability between who he is and what he has, an incommensurability between the phallus he has and what it is expected to be (and in this way no different from anyone with a phallus), which means that he has not become one with the norm, and yet he is still someone, speaking, insisting, even referring to himself. And it is from this gap, this incommensurability, between the norm that is supposed to inaugurate his humanness and the spoken insistence on himself that he performs that he derives his worth, that he speaks his worth. And we cannot precisely give content to this person at the very moment that he speaks his worth, which means that it is precisely the ways in which he is not fully recognizable, fully disposable, fully categorizable, that his humanness emerges. And this is important because we might ask that he enter into intelligibility in order to speak and to be known, but what he does instead, through his speech, is to offer a critical perspective on the norms that confer intelligibility itself. He shows, we might say, that there is an understanding to be had that exceeds the norms of intelligibility itself. And he achieves this “outside,” we might speculate, by refusing the interrogations that besiege him,

reversing their terms, and learning the ways in which he might escape. If he renders himself unintelligible to those who seek to know and capture his identity, this means that something about him is intelligible outside of the framework of accepted intelligibility. We might be tempted to say that there is some core of a person, and so some presumption of humanism, that emerges here, that is supervenient to the particular discourses on sexed and gendered intelligibility that constrain him. But that would mean only that he is denounced by one discourse only to be carried by another discourse, the discourse of humanism. Or we might say that there is some core of the subject who speaks, who speaks beyond what is sayable, and that it is this ineffability that marks David's speech, the ineffability of the other who is not disclosed through speech, but leaves a portentous shard of itself in its saying, a self that is beyond discourse itself.

But what I would prefer is that we might consider carefully that when David invokes the "I" in this quite hopeful and unexpected way, he is speaking about a certain conviction he has about his own lovability; he says that "they" must think he is a real loser if the only reason anyone is going to love him is because of what he has between his legs. The "they" is telling him that he will not be loved, or that he will not be loved unless he takes what they have for him, and that they have what he needs in order to get love, that he will be loveless without what they have. But he refuses to accept that what they are offering in their discourse is love. He refuses their offering of love, understanding it as a bribe, as a seduction to subjection. He will be and he is, he tells us, loved for some other reason, a reason they do not understand, and it is not

a reason we are given. It is clearly a reason that is beyond the regime of reason established by the norms of sexology itself. We know only that he holds out for another reason, and that in this sense, we no longer know what kind of reason this is, what reason can be; he establishes the limits of what they know, disrupting the politics of truth, making use of his desubjugation within that order of being to establish the possibility of love beyond the grasp of that norm. He positions himself, knowingly, in relation to the norm, but he does not comply with its requirements. He risks a certain “desubjugation”—is he a subject? How will we know? And in this sense, David’s discourse puts into play the operation of critique itself, critique which, defined by Foucault, is precisely the desubjugation of the subject within the politics of truth. This does not mean that David becomes unintelligible and, therefore, without value to politics; rather, he emerges at the limits of intelligibility, offering a perspective on the variable ways in which norms circumscribe the human. It is precisely because we understand, without quite grasping, that he has another reason, that he *is*, as it were, another reason, that we see the limits to the discourse of intelligibility that would decide his fate. David does not precisely occupy a new world, since he is still, even within the syntax which brings about his “I,” still positioned somewhere between the norm and its failure. And he is, finally, neither one; he is the human in its anonymity, as that which we do not yet know how to name or that which sets a limits on all naming. And in that sense, he is the anonymous—and critical—condition of the human as it speaks itself at the limits of what we think we know.

Postscript: As this book was going to press in June of 2004, I was saddened to learn that David Reimer took his life at the age of 38. The *New York Times* obituary (5/12/04) mentions that his brother died two years earlier and that he was now separated from his wife. It is difficult to know what, in the end, made his life unlivable or why this life was one he felt was time to end. It seems clear, however, that there was always a question posed for him, and by him, whether life in his gender would be survivable. It is unclear whether it was his gender that was the problem, or the “treatment” that brought about an enduring suffering for him. The norms governing what it is to be a worthy, recognizable, and sustainable human life clearly did not support his life in any continuous or solid way. Life for him was always a wager and a risk, a courageous and fragile accomplishment.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What is most shocking about David Reimer’s childhood experiences?
2. What are some of the problems inherent in establishing gender norms?
3. Butler talks about gender essentialism. What does she mean by that term?
4. What seems to be the basis of Dr. John Money’s assurance that gender identity is largely socialized?
5. What does David Reimer’s experience seem to say about the nature/nurture debate?
6. To what extent do you think a child’s choice of toys defines his or her gender?
7. Why did children treat Brenda so badly when she was a child? What motivates children to taunt someone like Brenda when she behaved differently from what they thought was normal?

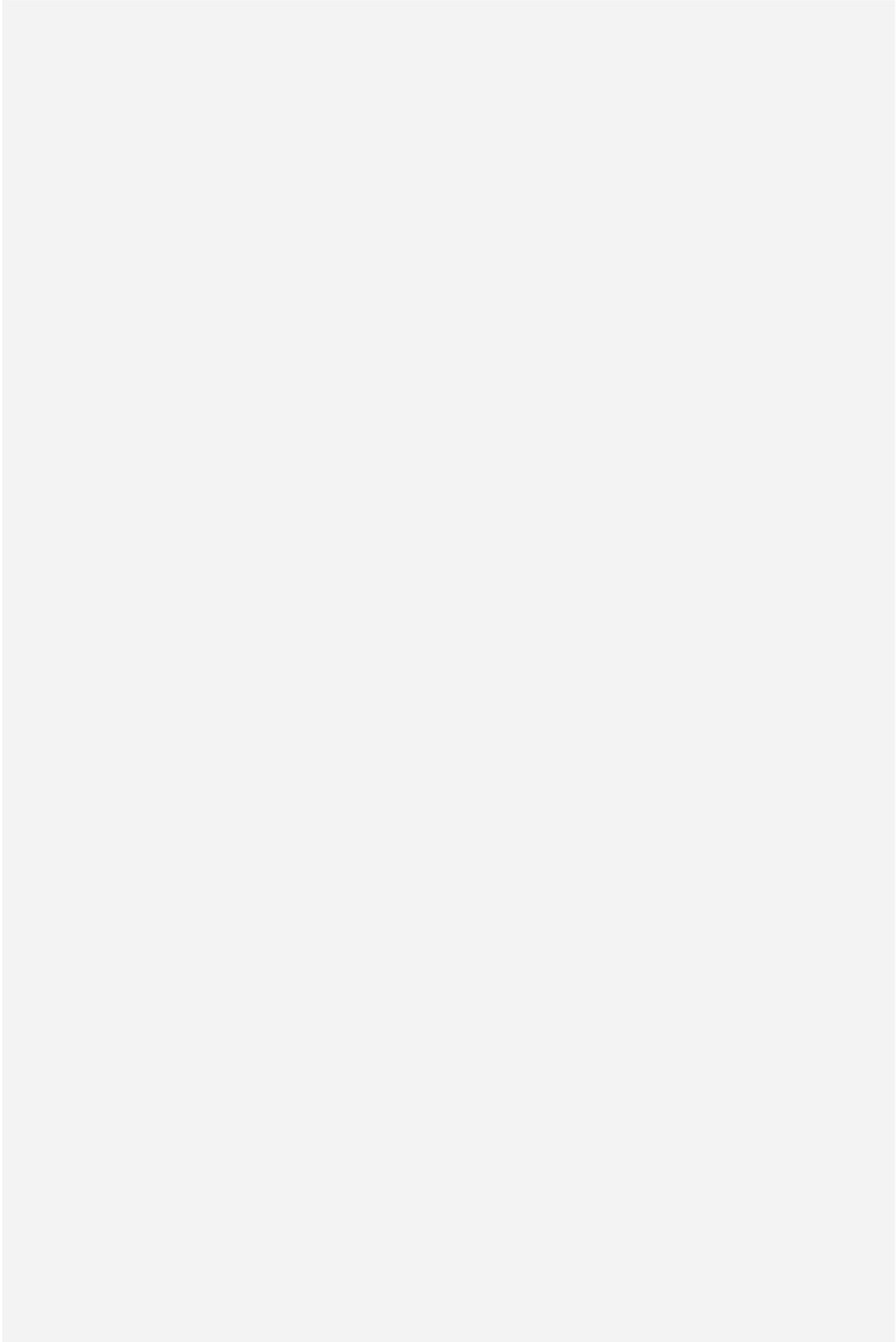
SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. In [paragraph 14](#), Butler talks about gender dimorphism. Explain what she means by the term and use the narrative about David Reimer to clarify what you think about the limits of gender identification based on the dimorphism of a male body and a female body. If you feel there are no limits, then explain how David Reimer's story clarifies your position.
2. Judging by the way people behave in your environment, what do you feel the markers of gender difference are? How are they expressed in social situations? How do you think Butler might describe gender differences in our society? How are they expressed in terms of clothing, attitudes, interests, language, and appearance? What are your views on gender-appropriate clothing, attitudes, interests, language, and appearance? Do most of your friends agree or disagree with you?
3. In his narrative, David denies that his value as a human being is limited to "what he has between his legs" ([para. 29](#)). Examine his narrative and decide whether you agree with Butler's analysis of this statement and her declaration that in deciding for a sex change he "does not trade in one gender norm for another." How much does "what he has between his legs" define him as a human being? Butler agrees with David on this issue. Do you? How do your peers generally feel about how genitalia define them in the estimation of others? How do you respond to their views on this issue?
4. In [paragraph 30](#), Butler talks about David's sense of worth. She says, "We might be tempted to say that there is some core of a person... that emerges here." Reflecting on David's own narrative about himself, defend or attack the view that there is a basic core to a person that may or may not be altered or affected by gender or gender choice. Does David's story shed light on the concept that people have a basic core? What seems to be Butler's view on this issue?
5. Is the feminist movement aided by the story of Dr. Money's treatment of David Reimer? Is Butler correct in feeling that feminists limit

themselves by assuming that there are only two genders and that they are based entirely on anatomy? Feminists reject the idea that anatomy is destiny, so would they not agree with Butler on this issue? If gender is not based on anatomy, what might it be based on? Does Butler give you any hints?

CONNECTIONS

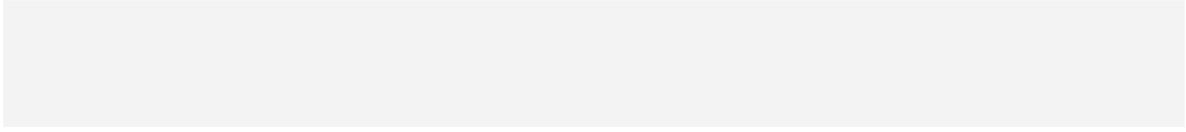
1. How do the questions of trust and distrust help clarify the principles that Butler develops in her argument? What in Karen Horney's essay ("[The Distrust Between the Sexes](#)") helps Butler make her case? How might Horney, as a psychologist, react to the story of David Reimer and his experiences in sex change? To what extent would Butler be likely to be suspicious of the categories that Horney establishes?
2. Butler's description of the difficulties David Reimer experienced reveals a great deal about cultural attitudes toward gender and how they affect an individual. In a brief essay, describe what you feel are the cultural attitudes toward gender in your town, city, or state. How do they appear similar to or different from the cultural attitudes you have experienced at your college or university? How do they appear similar to or different from the cultural attitudes toward gender that you experienced in high school? How have you changed since high school in your attitude toward gender issues?
3. The question of gender essentialism seemed settled during the time Sigmund Freud wrote "[The Oedipus Complex](#)" and Carl Jung wrote "[The Personal and the Collective Unconscious](#)". How would Freud and Jung's work be reinterpreted in light of the research Judith Butler has done in her discussion of David Reimer's experiences? How does what Freud and/or Jung has written help clarify what Butler has to say about gender? How do the views of these three authors inform your views?



Reflections on the Nature of Gender

Now that you have read the selections in Part Six, "Gender," consider how these writers have informed your views on gender and its place in our world.

1. What are the commonplace views of gender in our society?
2. How are gender views changing? How have your views changed?
3. What problems face a society that has established rigid gender-linked expectations?
4. Does our society expect different behavior from men than from women? Are those differences visible in daily behavior?
5. Is it possible for a society to mold similar behavior in men and women?
6. Is there an essential gender core?
7. Must gender be identified in terms of the genitalia at birth?
8. What is the relationship of gender identity to political or social equality?
9. How does a society establish an inferior gender? Is there an inferior gender?
10. What effects do current redefinitions of gender have on you and people in your immediate social world?



Part Seven SCIENCE

PLATO

FRANCIS BACON

CHARLES DARWIN

RACHEL CARSON

MICHIO KAKU

RUTH MOORE

JAMES GLEICK

Introduction

If there be light, then there is darkness; if cold, heat; if height, depth; if solid, fluid; if hard, soft; if rough, smooth; if calm, tempest; if prosperity, adversity; if life, death.

—PYTHAGORAS (c. 580–c. 500 B.C.E.)

Nature and nature's laws lay hid in the night.

God said, Let Newton be! And all was light!

—ALEXANDER POPE (1688–1744)

Science is the great antidote to the poison of enthusiasm and superstition.

—ADAM SMITH (1723–1790)

Every great advance in science has issued from a new audacity of imagination.

—JOHN DEWEY (1859–1952)

To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle, requires creative imagination and marks real advance in science.

—ALBERT EINSTEIN (1879–1955)

Science is a way of thinking much more than it is a body of knowledge.

—CARL SAGAN (1934–1996)

Science is not only a disciple of reason but, also, one of romance and passion.

—STEPHEN HAWKING (1942–2018)

Modern science emerged as a force to change the world in the seventeenth century. Great writers such as the English poet John

Donne (1572–1631) showed signs of worry and concern when they began to realize, as Donne said, that science “brings all into doubt.” Since the seventeenth century, there have been extraordinary discoveries that have indeed brought much of what was once ordinary belief into doubt. There have been advances that have clarified the nature of the universe, informing us about the moon, the sun, the planets, the stars, galaxies, and previously undreamed-of phenomena. We have learned much about the nature of the earth and its history, the relationship between animals and their development, the mysteries of quantum physics and relativity, the interiority of our genes, and the makeup of the brain itself. And there is undoubtedly much more to discover. Science has called into doubt long-held beliefs, and it has offered answers to questions that, only a comparatively short time ago, could not have been asked.

Plato (428–347 B.C.E.) differed from Aristotle in that he paid less attention to our sensory experiences than he did to ideas. Yet his discussion in the “Allegory of the Cave” was formative to the development of early Greek science because it addressed the manner in which our thoughts can be distorted by our approach to understanding. Plato pictures us as being like people who live in a cave watching shadows on the wall before us. We think those shadows are real because we can see no other features of the real world. In fact, however, the shadows are the appearances of things, the sensory qualities, which are all that we can ever hope to comprehend. Plato tells us that there is something behind sensory qualities, some reality that, because we are limited by our senses, we cannot see or even imagine. Plato insists that the real

can exist only in a pure spiritual realm. And because, in the Platonic scheme, we originally came from that realm, we have a dim memory of the real and interpret our sensory experience in accordance with our memory. Thus, there is a resemblance between the spiritual ideal and our sensory experience, but the resemblance is merely as close as the shadows in the cave are to the people who cast them.

At the time Francis Bacon (1561–1626) wrote, before the advent of sophisticated scientific instruments, most scientists relied on their five senses and their theoretical preconceptions to investigate the workings of the world around them. In “The Four Idols,” Bacon raises questions about these modes of scientific inquiry by asking: What casts of mind are essential to gaining knowledge? What prevents us from understanding nature clearly? By thus critiquing traditional presumptions and methods of investigation, Bacon challenges his readers to examine nature with new mental tools. He aims to free us from the intellectual limitations that make it difficult, and sometimes impossible, to know the truth.

In “Natural Selection,” Charles Darwin (1809–1882) proposes a theory of evolution by natural selection that forms the basis of our understanding of modern biology but that is still controversial in some parts of the world due to its explanation of human origins, an area traditionally explained by the world’s religions. While on a voyage around South America in HMS *Beagle*, Darwin observed remarkable similarities in the structures of various animals. He approached these discoveries with the advantages of a good

education, a deep knowledge of the Bible and theology (he was trained as a minister), and a systematic and inquiring mind. Ultimately, he developed his theories of evolution to explain the significance of resemblances he detected among his scientific samples of insects and flowers and other forms of life. Explaining the nature of nature forms the underpinnings of Darwin's work.

While she did not sound the first alarm concerning the environmental impacts of human activity, Rachel Carson (1907–1964) sounded one of the loudest in her 1962 book *The Silent Spring*. In her essay for that book, “The Obligation to Endure,” she describes the effects of using pesticides in our environment. Ultimately she condemns the people involved in the invention, marketing, and regulation of these pesticides for ignoring evidence that insecticides would last in the earth for hundreds of years and more and that they would eventually find their way into the cells of living animals and the cells of the humans that these chemicals were supposed help thrive. She also points out that, as Darwin predicted, the use of insecticides eventually produced insects that evolved immunities to the poison. Moreover, the planting of single crop farms, made possible by the insecticides, caused more unanticipated problems such as overproduction that resulted in farmers being paid not to produce food. What frustrated Carson most was the extensive poisoning of the environment through the use of chemicals that had no counterpart in nature and thus no natural way of being purged from the environment, an issue we still face today with plastic and many other industrially produced materials. Carson's analysis of the common pesticides in our environment led to the passage of laws

banning DDT and other chemicals and to the formation of many ecological organizations. Her alarm is still heard today.

The science writer Ruth Moore (1909–1989) undertook the job of updating Charles Darwin’s understanding of the age of the emergence of modern human beings. Traditional anthropologists argued for an earlier date than Moore was able to verify, but the most important distinction that Moore makes is in the question of what it was in terms of anatomy that caused humans to evolve from the apes. Darwin and his contemporaries were convinced that it was the development of the brain that made the change possible. But Moore was able to demonstrate that an earlier development, the change in pelvis shape from one that forced apes to walk bent over with their hands trailing the ground to the smaller and somewhat differently shaped pelvis that permitted early apes to walk upright, was the critical shift. That freed the hands for the use of tools, and brain development followed. This radical revision of the process of evolution was verified through later discoveries and research.

In “The Theory of the Universe?,” Michio Kaku (b. 1947) introduces some of the most extraordinary ideas developed by mathematical physicists in their effort to find a unified theory that will connect quantum mechanics with Einstein’s general relativity. Kaku reviews the four fundamental forces that account for all physical reality: gravity, electromagnetism, the strong nuclear force, and the weak nuclear force. He then goes on to explain why quantum theory describes all the particle physical phenomena and why general relativity describes all the cosmic physical

phenomena. Then, he explains that these theories are essentially distinct, perhaps even opposed to one another. What is needed is a great unified theory, which Einstein worked on for thirty years without success. Kaku suggests that superstring theory may be the answer that physicists have been looking for.

Among the many baffling problems in modern science is the difficulty we and scientists have in defining time. We all know time because we feel that we perceive it directly in terms of minutes, hours, days, even years. But James Gleick (b. 1954) sets out in “What Is Time?” to define the term only to discover that no dictionary is satisfying and no philosopher, ancient or modern, can produce a definition that is not circular or incomplete. In the process of following every lead, Gleick explores the mind-boggling reaches of quantum mechanics, which predicts that we cannot know for certainty the position of an atom until we observe it — and even then we may be deceived. What we learn is how complex the science of modern physics has become. Our world has been transformed from the three dimensions of classical physics to the four dimensions of modern physics by adding Albert Einstein’s concept of time as space: spacetime is now the fourth dimension. Modern astrophysics depends on this concept, making our ordinary conception of time insufficient for modern science.

All of these selections offer a range of ways of thinking in the world of science. They consider how we observe and collect knowledge about the world, how we can interpret it, and how it can be challenged and revised based on new information. As they engage with the world around them, from the historical to the

hypothetical and from the atomic to the universal, these selections consider how to gather evidence and conduct experiments, how to verify and replicate results, and how to communicate this knowledge to non-scientists, all critical aspects of engaging with scientific knowledge for us today.

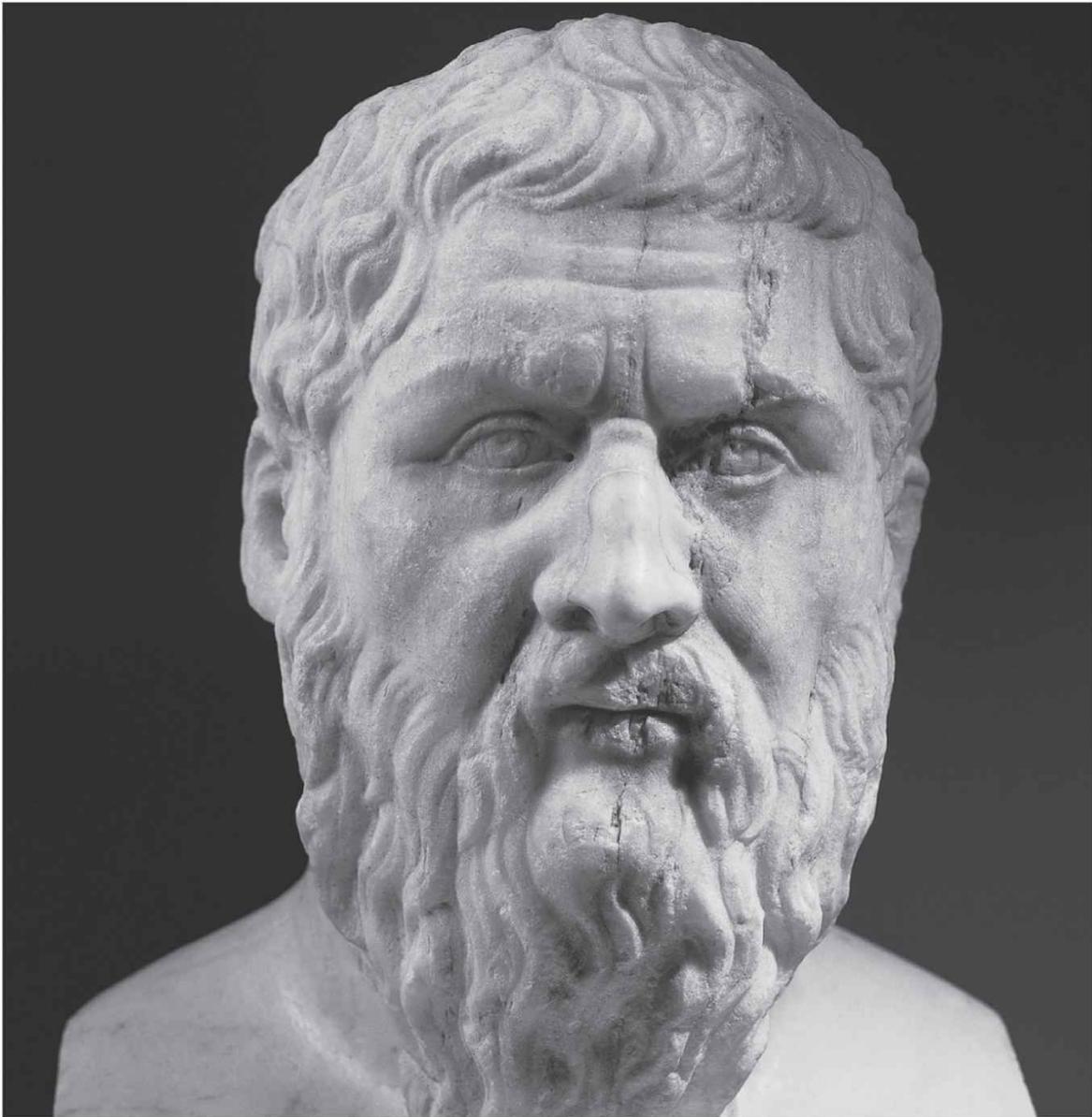
Some Considerations about the Nature of Science

Before reading the selections that follow, consider your views of science. Ask yourself the following questions and respond to each in a reading journal. Discuss your answers with your classmates.

1. What indebtedness do you feel to modern science?
2. What is the scientific method?
3. What do politicians think about science?
4. When does science become endangering?
5. What aspects of science tend to be baffling?
6. When does a theory like evolution become a fact?
7. How does time inform biology?
8. In what ways does science threaten you?
9. What are the most important gifts of modern science to our nation?
10. What attracts young people to science?



Plato *The Allegory of the Cave*



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PLATO (428–347 B.C.E.) was born into an aristocratic, probably Athenian, family and educated according to the best precepts available. He eventually became a student of Socrates and later involved himself closely with Socrates's work and teaching. Plato was not only Socrates's finest student but also the one who immortalized Socrates in his works. Most of Plato's works are

philosophical essays in which Socrates speaks as a character in a dialogue with one or more students or listeners.

Both Socrates and Plato lived in turbulent times. In 404 B.C.E. Athens was defeated by Sparta, and its government was taken over by tyrants. Political life in Athens became dangerous. Plato felt, however, that he could effect positive change in Athenian - politics — until Socrates was tried unjustly for corrupting the youth of Athens and sentenced to death in 399 B.C.E. After that, Plato withdrew from public life and devoted himself to writing and to the academy he founded in an olive grove in Athens. The academy endured for almost a thousand years, which tells us how greatly Plato's thought was valued.

Although it is not easy to condense Plato's views, he may be said to have held the world of sense perception to be inferior to the world of ideal entities that exist only in a pure spiritual realm. These ideals, or forms, Plato argued, are perceived directly by everyone before birth and then dimly remembered here on earth. But the memory, dim as it is, enables people to understand what the senses perceive, despite the fact that the senses are unreliable and their perceptions imperfect.

This view of reality has long been important to philosophers because it gives a philosophical basis to antimaterialistic thought. It values the spirit first and frees people from the tyranny of sensory perception and sensory reward. In the case of love, Plato held that Eros leads individuals to revere the body and its pleasures; but the thrust of his teaching is that the body is a

metaphor for spiritual delights. Plato maintains that the body is only a starting point, which eventually can lead to both spiritual fulfillment and the appreciation of true beauty.

On the one hand, “The Allegory of the Cave” is a discussion of politics: *The Republic*, from which it is taken, is a treatise on justice and the ideal government. On the other hand, it has long stood as an example of the notion that if we rely on our perceptions to know the truth about the world, then we will know very little about it. In order to live ethically, it is essential to know what is true and, therefore, what is important beyond the world of sensory perception.

Plato’s allegory has been persuasive for centuries and remains at the center of thought that attempts to counter the pleasures of the sensual life. Most religions aim for spiritual enlightenment and praise the qualities of the soul, which lies beyond perception. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Christianity and other religions have developed systems of thought that bear a close resemblance to Plato’s. Later refinements of his thought, usually called Neo-Platonism, have been influential even into modern times.

PLATO’S RHETORIC

Two important rhetorical techniques are at work in the following selection. The first and more obvious — at least on one level — is the device of the allegory, a story in which the characters and situations actually represent people and situations in another

context. It is a difficult technique to sustain, although Aesop's fables were certainly successful in using animals to represent people and their foibles. The advantage of the technique is that a complex and sometimes unpopular argument can be fought and won before the audience realizes that an argument is under way. The disadvantage of the technique is that the terms of the allegory may only approximate the situation it represents; thus, the argument may fail to be convincing.

The second rhetorical technique Plato uses is dialogue. In fact, this device is a hallmark of Plato's work; indeed, most of his writings are called dialogues. The *Symposium*, *Apology*, *Phaedo*, *Crito*, *Meno*, and most of his other famous works are written in dialogue form. Usually in these works Socrates is speaking to a student or a friend about highly abstract issues, asking questions that require simple answers. Slowly, the questioning proceeds to elucidate the answers to complex issues.

This question-and-answer technique basically constitutes the Socratic method. Socrates analyzes the answer to each question, examines its implications, and then asserts the truth. The method works partly because Plato believes that people do not learn things but remember them. That is, people originate from heaven, where they knew the truth; they already possess knowledge and must recover it by means of the dialogue. Socrates' method is ideally suited to that purpose.

Beyond these techniques, however, we must look at Plato's style. It is true that he is working with difficult ideas, but his style is so

clear, simple, and direct that few people would have trouble understanding what he is saying. Considering the influence this work has had on world thought, and the reputation Plato had earned by the time he wrote *The Republic*, its style is remarkably plain and accessible. Plato's respect for rhetoric and its proper uses is part of the reason he can express himself with such impressive clarity.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. In what ways are we like the people in the cave looking at shadows?
2. Why is the world of sensory perception somewhat illusory?
3. For Plato, what is the difference between the upper world and the lower world?

From *The Republic*. Translated and glossed by Benjamin Jowett.

The Allegory of the Cave

SOCRATES,
GLAUCON. *The den,
the prisoners: the
light at a distance;*

And now, I said, let me show in a figure how far our nature 1
is enlightened or unenlightened: — Behold! human
beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth
open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here
they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and
necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see
before them, being prevented by the chains from turning
round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing
at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there
is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built
along the way, like the screen which marionette players have
in front of them, over which they show the puppets.

I see. 2

*the low wall, and the
moving figures of
which the shadows
are seen on the
opposite wall of the
den.*

And do you see, I said, men passing along the wall carry- 3
ing all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals
made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear
over the wall? Some of them are talking, others silent.

You have shown me a strange image, and they are 4
strange prisoners.

Like ourselves, I replied; and they see only their own 5
shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire
throws on the opposite wall of the cave?

True, he said; how could they see anything but the shad- 6
ows if they were never allowed to move their heads?

And of the objects which are being carried in like man- 7
ner they would only see the shadows?

Yes, he said. 8

Description

“The text titled ‘The Allegory of the Cave’ reads,
Paragraph 1. And now, I said, let me show in a figure how far our
nature is enlightened or unenlightened: m dash Behold! Human
beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open towards
the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from

their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets. [A margin note reads, Socrates, Glaucon. The den, the prisoners: the light at a distance.]

Paragraph 2. I see.

Paragraph 3. And do you see, I said, men passing along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear over the wall? Some of them are talking, others silent. [A margin note reads, the low wall, and the moving figures of which the shadows are seen on the opposite wall of the den.]

Paragraph 4. You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners.

Paragraph 5. Like ourselves, I replied; and they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave?

Paragraph 6. True, he said; how could they see anything but the shadows if they were never allowed to move their heads?

Paragraph 7. And of the objects which are being carried in like manner they would only see the shadows?

Paragraph 8. Yes, he said."

And if they were able to converse with one another, 9
would they not suppose that they were naming what was
actually before them?

Very true. 10

*The prisoners would
mistake the shadows
for realities.*

And suppose further that the prison had an echo which 11
came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy
when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they
heard came from the passing shadow?

No question, he replied. 12

To them, I said, the truth would be literally nothing but 13
the shadows of the images.

That is certain. 14

*And when released,
they would still
persist in maintaining
the superior truth of
the shadows.*

And now look again, and see what will naturally follow 15
if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error.
At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled sud-
denly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look
towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will
distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of
which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then
conceive someone saying to him, that what he saw before
was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer
to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence,
he has a clearer vision — what will be his reply? And you may
further imagine that his instructor is pointing to the objects
as they pass and requiring him to name them, — will he not
be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which
he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now
shown to him?

Far truer. 16

And if he is compelled to look straight at the light, will 17
he not have a pain in his eyes which will make him turn away
to take refuge in the objects of vision which he can see, and
which he will conceive to be in reality clearer than the things
which are now being shown to him?

True, he said. 18

*When dragged
upwards, they would
be dazzled by excess
of light.*

And suppose once more, that he is reluctantly dragged 19
up a steep and rugged ascent, and held fast until he is forced
into the presence of the sun himself, is he not likely to be
pained and irritated? When he approaches the light his eyes
will be dazzled, and he will not be able to see anything at all
of what are now called realities.

Not all in a moment, he said. 20

Description

“The text reads,

Paragraph 9. And if they were able to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them?

Paragraph 10. Very true.

Paragraph 11. And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow? [A margin note reads, The prisoners would mistake the shadows for realities.]

Paragraph 12. No question, he replied.

Paragraph 13. To them, I said, the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images.

Paragraph 14. That is certain.

Paragraph 15. And now look again, and see what will naturally follow if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then conceive someone saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision m dash what will be his reply? And you may further imagine that his instructor is pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them, m dash will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him? [A margin note reads, And when released, they would still persist in maintaining the superior truth of the shadows.]

Paragraph 16. Far truer.

Paragraph 17. And if he is compelled to look straight at the light, will he not have a pain in his eyes which will make him turn away to take refuge in the objects of vision which he can see, and which he will

conceive to be in reality clearer than the things which are now being shown to him?

Paragraph 18. True, he said.

Paragraph 19. And suppose once more, that he is reluctantly dragged up a steep and rugged ascent, and held fast until he is forced into the presence of the sun himself, is he not likely to be pained and irritated? When he approaches the light his eyes will be dazzled, and he will not be able to see anything at all of what are now called realities. [A margin note reads, When dragged upwards, they would be dazzled by excess of light.]

Paragraph 20. Not all in a moment, he said.”

He will require to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world. And first he will see the shadows best, next the reflections of men and other objects in the water, and then the objects themselves; then he will gaze upon the light of the moon and the stars and the spangled heaven; and he will see the sky and the stars by night better than the sun or the light of the sun by day? 21

Certainly. 22

At length they will see the sun and understand his nature.

Last of all he will be able to see the sun, and not mere reflections of him in the water, but he will see him in his own proper place, and not in another; and he will contemplate him as he is. 23

Certainly. 24

He will then proceed to argue that this is he who gives the season and the years, and is the guardian of all that is in the visible world, and in a certain way the cause of all things which he and his fellows have been accustomed to behold? 25

Clearly, he said, he would first see the sun and then reason about him. 26

They would then pity their old companions of the den.

And when he remembered his old habitation, and the wisdom of the den and his fellow prisoners, do you not suppose that he would felicitate himself on the change, and pity them? 27

Certainly, he would. 28

And if they were in the habit of conferring honors among themselves on those who were quickest to observe the passing shadows and to remark which of them went before, and which followed after, and which were together; and who were therefore best able to draw conclusions as to the future, do you think that he would care for such honors and glories, or envy the possessors of them? Would he not say with Homer, 29

Better to be the poor servant of a poor master, and to endure anything, rather than think as they do and live after their manner? 30

Yes, he said, I think that he would rather suffer anything than entertain these false notions and live in this miserable manner. 31

Imagine once more, I said, such a one coming suddenly out of the sun to be replaced in his old situation; would he not be certain to have his eyes full of darkness? 32

To be sure, he said. 33

Description

“The text reads,

Paragraph 21. He will require to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world. And first he will see the shadows best, next the reflections of men and other objects in the water, and then the objects themselves; then he will gaze upon the light of the moon and the stars and the spangled heaven; and he will see the sky and the stars by night better than the sun or the light of the sun by day?

Paragraph 22. Certainly.

Paragraph 23. Last of all he will be able to see the sun, and not mere reflections of him in the water, but he will see him in his own proper place, and not in another; and he will contemplate him as he is. [A margin note reads, At length they will see the sun and understand his nature.]

Paragraph 24. Certainly.

Paragraph 25 He will then proceed to argue that this is he who gives the season and the years, and is the guardian of all that is in the visible world, and in a certain way the cause of all things which he and his fellows have been accustomed to behold?

Paragraph 26. Clearly, he said, he would first see the sun and then reason about him.

Paragraph 27. And when he remembered his old habitation, and the wisdom of the den and his fellow prisoners, do you not suppose that he would felicitate himself on the change, and pity them? [A margin note reads, They would then pity their old companions of the den.]

Paragraph 28. Certainly, he would.

Paragraph 29. And if they were in the habit of conferring honors among themselves on those who were quickest to observe the passing shadows and to remark which of them went before, and which followed after, and which were together; and who were therefore best able to draw conclusions as to the future, do you think that he would care for such honors and glories, or envy the possessors of them?

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Paragraph 30. Better to be the poor servant of a poor master,

Paragraph 31. and to endure anything, rather than think as they do

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Paragraph 33. Imagine once more, I said, such a one coming suddenly out of the sun to be replaced in his old situation; would he not be certain to have his eyes full of darkness?

Paragraph 34. To be sure, he said.”

But when they returned to the den, they would see much worse than those who had never left it.

And if there were a contest, and he had to compete in measuring the shadows with the prisoners who had never moved out of the den, while his sight was still weak, and before his eyes had become steady (and the time which would be needed to acquire this new habit of sight might be very considerable), would he not be ridiculous? Men would say of him that up he went and down he came without his eyes; and that it was better not even to think of ascending; and if any one tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender, and they would put him to death. 34

No question, he said. 35

The prison is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun.

This entire allegory, I said, you may now append, dear Glaucon, to the previous argument; the prison house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world according to my poor belief, which, at your desire, I have expressed — whether rightly or wrongly God knows. But, whether true or false, my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally either in public or private life must have his eye fixed. 36

I agree, he said, as far as I am able to understand you. 37

Moreover, I said, you must not wonder that those who attain to this beatific vision are unwilling to descend to human affairs; for their souls are ever hastening into the upper world where they desire to dwell; which desire of theirs is very natural, if our allegory may be trusted. 38

Yes, very natural. 39

Nothing extraordinary in the philosopher being unable to see in the dark.

And is there anything surprising in one who passes from divine contemplations to the evil state of man, misbehaving himself in a ridiculous manner; if, while his eyes are blinking and before he has become accustomed to the surrounding darkness, he is compelled to fight in courts of law, or in other places, about the images or the shadows of images of justice, and is endeavoring to meet the conceptions of those who have never yet seen absolute justice? 40

Description

"The text reads,

Paragraph 35. And if there were a contest, and he had to compete in measuring the shadows with the prisoners who had never moved out of the den, while his sight was still weak, and before his eyes had become steady (and the time which would be needed to acquire this new habit of sight might be very considerable), would he not be ridiculous? Men would say of him that up he went and down he came without his eyes; and that it was better not even to think of ascending; and if any one tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender, and they would put him to death. [A margin note reads, But when they returned to the den, they would see much worse than those who had never left it.]

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*The eyes may be
blinded in two ways,
by excess or by
defect of light.*

Anything but surprising, he replied.

41

Anyone who has common sense will remember that the bewilderments of the eyes are of two kinds, and arise from two causes, either from coming out of the light or from going into the light, which is true of the mind's eye, quite as much as of the bodily eye; and he who remembers this when he sees anyone whose vision is perplexed and weak, will not be too ready to laugh; he will first ask whether that soul of man has come out of the brighter life, and is unable to see because unaccustomed to the dark, or having turned from darkness to the day is dazzled by excess of light. And he will count the one happy in his condition and state of being, and he will pity the other; or, if he have a mind to laugh at the soul which comes from below into the light, there will be more reason in this than in the laugh which greets him who returns from above out of the light into the den.

42

That, he said, is a very just distinction.

43

*The conversion of the
soul is the turning
round the eye from
darkness to light.*

But then, if I am right, certain professors of education must be wrong when they say that they can put a knowledge into the soul which was not there before, like sight into blind eyes.

44

They undoubtedly say this, he replied.

45

*the virtue of wisdom
more than anything
else contains a divine
element which always
remains*

Whereas, our argument shows that the power and capacity of learning exists in the soul already; and that just as the eye was unable to turn from darkness to light without the whole body, so too the instrument of knowledge can only by the movement of the whole soul be turned from the world of becoming into that of being, and learn by degrees to endure the sight of being, and of the brightest and best of being, or in other words, of the good.

46

Very true.

47

And must there not be some art which will effect conversion in the easiest and quickest manner; not implanting the faculty of sight, for that exists already, but has been turned in the wrong direction, and is looking away from the truth?

48

Yes, he said, such an art may be presumed.

49

And whereas the other so-called virtues of the soul seem to be akin to bodily qualities, for even when they are not originally innate they can be implanted later by habit and exercise, the virtue of wisdom more than anything else contains a divine element which always remains, and by this conversion is rendered useful and profitable; or, on the

50

Description

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Paragraph 47. Whereas, our argument shows that the power and capacity of learning exists in the soul already; and that just as the eye was unable to turn from darkness to light without the whole body, so too the instrument of knowledge can only by the movement of the whole soul be turned from the world of becoming into that of being, and learn by degrees to endure the sight of being, and of the brightest and best of being, or in other words, of the good.

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*The virtue of wisdom
has a divine power
which may be turned
either towards good
or towards evil.*

other hand, hurtful and useless. Did you never observe the narrow intelligence flashing from the keen eye of a clever rogue—how eager he is, how clearly his paltry soul sees the way to his end; he is the reverse of blind, but his keen eyesight is forced into the service of evil, and he is mischievous in proportion to his cleverness?

Very true, he said.

51

But what if there had been a circumcision of such natures in the days of their youth; and they had been severed from those sensual pleasures, such as eating and drinking, which, like leaden weights, were attached to them at their birth, and which drag them down and turn the vision of their souls upon the things that are below—if, I say, they had been released from these impediments and turned in the opposite direction, the very same faculty in them would have seen the truth as keenly as they see what their eyes are turned to now.

52

Very likely.

53

*Neither the
uneducated nor the
over-educated will be
good servants of the
State.*

Yes, I said; and there is another thing which is likely, or rather a necessary inference from what has preceded, that neither the uneducated and uninformed of the truth, nor yet those who never make an end of their education, will be able ministers of State; not the former, because they have no single aim of duty which is the rule of all their actions, private as well as public; nor the latter, because they will not act at all except upon compulsion, fancying that they are already dwelling apart in the islands of the blessed.

54

Very true, he replied.

55

Then, I said, the business of us who are the founders of the State will be to compel the best minds to attain that knowledge which we have already shown to be the greatest of all—they must continue to ascend until they arrive at the good; but when they have ascended and seen enough we must not allow them to do as they do now.

56

What do you mean?

57

*Men should ascend
to the upper world,
but they should also
return to the lower.*

I mean that they remain in the upper world: but this must not be allowed; they must be made to descend again among the prisoners in the den, and partake of their labors and honors, whether they are worth having or not.

58

But is not this unjust? he said; ought we to give them a worse life, when they might have a better?

59

You have again forgotten, my friend, I said, the intention of the legislator, who did not aim at making any one class in

60

Description

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Paragraph 61. You have again forgotten, my friend, I said, the intention of the legislator, who did not aim at making any one class in ellipsis.”

the State happy above the rest; the happiness was to be in the whole State, and he held the citizens together by persuasion and necessity, making them benefactors of the State, and therefore benefactors of one another; to this end he created them, not to please themselves, but to be his instruments in binding up the State.

True, he said, I had forgotten.

61

The duties of philosophers.

Observe, Glaucon, that there will be no injustice in compelling our philosophers to have a care and providence of others; we shall explain to them that in other States, men of their class are not obliged to share in the toils of politics: and this is reasonable, for they grow up at their own sweet will, and the government would rather not have them. Being self-taught, they cannot be expected to show any gratitude for a culture which they have never received. But we have brought you into the world to be rulers of the hive, kings of yourselves and of the other citizens, and have educated you far better and more perfectly than they have been educated, and you are better able to share in the double duty. Wherefore each of you, when his turn comes, must go down to the general underground abode, and get the habit of seeing in the dark. When you have acquired the habit, you will see ten thousand times better than the inhabitants of the den, and you will know what the several images are, and what they represent, because you have seen the beautiful and just and good in their truth. And thus our State, which is also yours, will be a reality, and not a dream only, and will be administered in a spirit unlike that of other States, in which men fight with one another about shadows only and are distracted in the struggle for power, which in their eyes is a great good. Whereas the truth is that the State in which the rulers are most reluctant to govern is always the best and most quietly governed, and the State in which they are most eager, the worst.

62

Their obligations to their country will induce them to take part in the government.

Quite true, he replied.

63

And will our pupils, when they hear this, refuse to take their turn at the toils of State, when they are allowed to spend the greater part of their time with one another in the heavenly light?

64

Description

“The text reads, ellipsis the State happy above the rest; the happiness was to be in the whole State, and he held the citizens together by persuasion and necessity, making them benefactors of the State, and therefore benefactors of one another; to this end he created them, not to please themselves, but to be his instruments in binding up the State.

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Paragraph 64. Quite true, he replied.

Paragraph 65. And will our pupils, when they hear this, refuse to take

their turn at the toils of State, when they are allowed to spend the greater part of their time with one another in the heavenly light?"

They will be willing but not anxious to rule.

Impossible, he answered; for they are just men, and the commands which we impose upon them are just; there can be no doubt that every one of them will take office as a stern necessity, and not after the fashion of our present rulers of State. 65

The statesman must be provided with a better life than that of a ruler; and then he will not covet office.

Yes, my friend, I said; and there lies the point. You must contrive for your future rulers another and a better life than that of a ruler, and then you may have a well-ordered State; for only in the State which offers this, will they rule who are truly rich, not in silver and gold, but in virtue and wisdom, which are the true blessings of life. Whereas if they go to the administration of public affairs, poor and hungering after their own private advantage, thinking that hence they are to snatch the chief good, order there can never be; for they will be fighting about office, and the civil and domestic broils which thus arise will be the ruin of the rulers themselves and of the whole State. 66

Most true, he replied. 67

And the only life which looks down upon the life of political ambition is that of true philosophy. Do you know of any other? 68

Indeed, I do not, he said. 69

Description

"The text reads,

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Paragraph 68. Most true, he replied.

Paragraph 69. And the only life which looks down upon the life of political ambition is that of true philosophy. Do you know of any other?

Paragraph 70. Indeed, I do not, he said.”

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What is the relationship between Socrates and Glaucon? Are they equal in intellectual authority? Are they concerned with the same issues?
2. How does the allegory of the prisoners in the cave watching shadows on a wall relate to us today? What shadows do we see, and how do they distort our sense of what is real?
3. Are we prisoners in the same sense that Plato’s characters are?
4. If Plato is right that the material world is an illusion, how would too great a reliance on materialism affect ethical decisions?
5. What ethical issues, if any, are raised by Plato’s allegory?
6. In [paragraph 50](#), Plato states that the virtue of wisdom “contains a divine element.” What is the “divine element”? What does this statement seem to mean? Do you agree with Plato?
7. What distinctions does Plato make between the public and the private? Would you make the same distinctions (see [paras. 54–56](#))?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Analyze the allegory of the cave for its strengths and weaknesses. Consider what the allegory implies for people living in a world of the senses and for what might lie behind that world. To what extent are people like (or unlike) the figures in the cave? To what extent is the world we know like the cave?
2. Socrates is concerned at the end of the dialogue about the rulers of the state, explaining that they must be more than simply rulers. They must be philosophers, by which he means they must possess wisdom. Explain how possessing a full understanding of important scientific concepts is equivalent to a ruler's possessing wisdom. Why should a politician in a modern democracy be aware of the most important developments in science? What has science got to do with politics? What kind of "cave" sometimes imprisons politicians and makes it difficult for them to know the truth about science?
3. As far as Plato is concerned, his tale of captives in a cave relates to their being unable to know the truth about the ideal world. But the allegory may also apply to our own inability, because of an ignorance of science, to know the truth about our world. Plato is talking about our perceptions, our ability to distinguish the true from the false. What does his allegory tell us about how we can understand the true nature of the world around us today? How does science help us see the truth about our existence? What is the equivalent in modern terms of the cave in which Plato's prisoners live?
4. Today, there is a great deal of information about the decisions that ruling politicians make regarding energy exploration, advanced weaponry, human genetics, and agricultural development. These decisions require a great deal of scientific understanding. Pick one of these topics, research the current literature on it, and find out what kind of positions current politicians are taking. What laws have been written (or ignored) that have required sound scientific understanding? Which politicians have held which positions? Are the politicians you read about well versed in the science that is necessary for their making a sound and lasting judgment?
5. Socrates states unequivocally that Athens should compel the best and the most intelligent young men to be rulers of the state. Review

his reasons for saying so, consider what his concept of the state is, and then take a stand on the issue. Is it right to compel the best and most intelligent young people to become rulers? If so, would it be equally proper to compel those well suited for the professions of law, medicine, teaching, or religion to follow those respective callings? Would an ideal society result if all people were forced to practice the calling for which they had the best aptitude?

CONNECTIONS

1. Plato has a great deal to say about goodness as it relates to government. Compare his views with those of Lao-tzu (“[Thoughts from the Tao Te Ching](#)”) and Niccolò Machiavelli (“[The Qualities of the Prince](#)”). Which of these thinkers would Plato have agreed with most? In comparing these three writers and their political views, consider the nature of goodness they required in a ruler. Do you think that we hold similar attitudes today in our expectations for the goodness of our government?
2. Plato is concerned with the question of how we know what we know. Francis Bacon in “[The Four Idols](#)” is concerned with the same question, although he poses it in different terms. Examine the fundamental issues each author raises. How well do these thinkers agree on basic issues? To what extent, for example, does Bacon warn us to beware the evidence of our senses? To what extent is Bacon as concerned about getting to the truth as Plato is?



Francis Bacon *The Four Idols*



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FRANCIS BACON, Lord Verulam (1561–1626), lived during one of the most exciting times in history. Among his contemporaries were the essayist Michel Eyquem de Montaigne; the playwrights - Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare; the adventurer Sir Francis Drake; and Queen Elizabeth I, in whose reign Bacon held several high offices. He became lord high chancellor of England in

1618 but fell from power in 1621 through a complicated series of events, among which was his complicity in a bribery scheme. His so-called crimes were minor, but he paid dearly for them. His book *Essayes* (1597) was exceptionally popular during his lifetime, and when he found himself without a proper job, he devoted himself to what he declared to be his own true work: writing about philosophy and science.

His purpose in *Novum Organum* (The New Organon), published in 1620, was to replace the old organon, or instrument of thought, Aristotle's treatises on logic and thought. Despite Aristotle's pervasive influence on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century thought — his texts were used in virtually all schools and colleges — Bacon assumed that Aristotelian deductive logic produced error. In *Novum Organum* he tried to set the stage for a new attitude toward logic and scientific inquiry. He proposed a system of reasoning usually referred to as induction. This quasi-scientific method involves collecting and listing observations from nature. Once a mass of observations is gathered and organized, Bacon believed, the truth about what is observed will become apparent.

Bacon is often mistakenly credited with having invented the scientific method of inquiring into nature, but although he was right about the need for collecting and observing, he was wrong about the outcome of such endeavors. After all, one could watch an infinite number of apples (and oranges, too) fall to the ground without ever having the slightest sense of why they do so. What Bacon failed to realize — and he died before he could become scientific enough to realize it — is the creative function of the

scientist as expressed in the hypothesis. The hypothesis — an educated guess about why something happens — must be tested by the kinds of observations Bacon recommended.

Nonetheless, “The Four Idols” is a brilliant work. It does establish the requirements for the kind of observation that produces true scientific knowledge. Bacon despaired of any thoroughly objective inquiry in his own day, in part because no one paid attention to the ways in which the idols, limiting preconceptions, strangled thought, observation, and imagination. He realized that the would-be natural philosopher was foiled even before he began. Bacon was a farsighted man. He was correct about the failures of science in his time; and he was correct, moreover, in his assessment that advancement would depend on sensory perception and on aids to perception, such as microscopes and telescopes. The real brilliance of “The Four Idols” lies in Bacon’s focus not on what is observed but on the instrument of observation — the human mind. Only when the instrument is freed of error can we rely on its observations to reveal the truth.

BACON’S RHETORIC

Bacon was trained during the great age of rhetoric, and his prose (even though in this case it is translated from Latin) shows the clarity, balance, and organization that characterize the prose writing of seventeenth-century England. The most basic device Bacon uses is enumeration: stating clearly that there are four idols and implying that he will treat each one in turn.

Enumeration is one of the most common and most reliable rhetorical devices. The listener hears a speaker say, “I have only three things I want to say today” and is alerted to listen for all three, while feeling secretly grateful that there are only three. When encountering complex material, the reader is always happy to have such “road signs” as, “The second aspect of this question is....”

“The Four Idols,” after a three-paragraph introduction, proceeds with a single paragraph devoted to each idol, so that we have an early definition of each and a sense of what to look for.

[Paragraphs 8–16](#) cover only the issues related to the Idols of the Tribe: the problems all people have simply because they are people. [Paragraphs 17–22](#) consider the Idols of the Cave: those particular fixations individuals have because of their special backgrounds or limitations. [Paragraphs 23–26](#) address the questions related to Idols of the Marketplace, particularly those that deal with the way people misuse words and abuse definitions. The remainder of the selection treats the Idols of the Theater, which relate entirely to philosophic systems and preconceptions — all of which tend to narrow the scope of research and understanding.

Enumeration is used within each of these groups of paragraphs as well. Bacon often begins a paragraph with such statements as, “There is one principal ... distinction between different minds” ([para. 19](#)). Or he says, “The idols imposed by words on the understanding are of two kinds” ([para. 24](#)). The effect is to ensure clarity where confusion could easily reign.

As an added means of achieving clarity, Bacon sets aside a single paragraph — the last — to summarize the main points that he has made, in the order in which they were made.

Within any section of this selection, Bacon depends on observation, example, and reason to make his points. When he speaks of a given idol, he defines it, gives several examples to make it clearer, discusses its effects on thought, and then dismisses it as dangerous. He then goes on to the next idol. Where appropriate, in some cases he names those who are victims of a specific idol. In each case he tries to be thorough, explanatory, and convincing.

Not only is this work a landmark in thought, it is also, because of its absolute clarity, a beacon. We can still benefit from its light.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Francis Bacon's "The Four Idols." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What are the four idols?
2. Why do the four idols make it difficult for us to see the truth?
3. What are some chief characteristics of human understanding?

From *Novum Organum*. Translated by Francis Headlam and R. L. Ellis.

The Four Idols

The idols¹ and false notions which are now in possession of the human understanding, and have taken deep root therein, not only so beset men's minds that truth can hardly find entrance, but even after entrance obtained, they will again in the very instauration² of the sciences meet and trouble us, unless men being forewarned of the danger fortify themselves as far as may be against their assaults.

There are four classes of idols which beset men's minds. To these for distinction's sake I have assigned names — calling the first class *Idols of the Tribe*; the second, *Idols of the Cave*; the third, *Idols of the Marketplace*; the fourth, *Idols of the Theater*.

The formation of ideas and axioms by true induction³ is no doubt the proper remedy to be applied for the keeping off and clearing away of idols. To point them out, however, is of great use; for the doctrine of idols is to the interpretation of nature what the doctrine of the refutation of sophisms⁴ is to common logic.

For it is a false assertion that the sense of man is the measure of things. On the contrary, all perceptions as well of the sense as of the mind are according to the measure

of the individual and not according to the measure of the universe.

The *Idols of the Tribe* have their foundation in human nature itself, and in the tribe or race of men. For it is a false assertion that the sense of man is the measure of things. On the contrary, all perceptions as well of the sense as of the mind are according to the measure of the individual and not according to the measure of the universe. And the human understanding is like a false mirror, which, receiving rays irregularly, distorts and discolors the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it.

The *Idols of the Cave* are the idols of the individual man. For everyone (besides the errors common to human nature in general) has a cave or den of his own, which refracts⁵ and discolors the light of nature; owing either to his own proper and peculiar nature; or to his education and conversation with others; or to the reading of books, and the authority of those whom he esteems and admires; or to the differences of impressions, accordingly as they take place in a mind preoccupied and predisposed or in a mind indifferent and settled; or the like. So that the spirit of man (according as it is meted out to different individuals) is in fact a thing variable and full of perturbation,⁶ and governed as it were by chance. Whence it was well observed by Heraclitus⁷ that men look for sciences in their own lesser worlds, and not in the greater or common world.

There are also idols formed by the intercourse and association of men with each other, which I call *Idols of the Marketplace*, on account of the commerce and consort of men there. For it is by discourse that men associate; and words are imposed according to the apprehension of the vulgar.⁸ And therefore the ill and unfit choice of words wonderfully obstructs the understanding. Nor do the definitions or explanations wherewith in some things learned men are wont⁹ to guard and defend themselves, by any means set the matter right. But words plainly force and overrule the understanding, and throw all into confusion and lead men away into numberless empty controversies and idle fancies.

Lastly, there are idols which have immigrated into men's minds from the various dogmas of philosophies, and also from wrong laws of demonstration.¹⁰ These I call *Idols of the Theater*; because in my judgment all the received systems¹¹ are but so many stage-plays, representing worlds of their own creation after an unreal and scenic fashion. Nor is it only of the systems now in vogue, or only of the ancient sects and philosophies, that I speak; for many more plays of the same kind may yet be composed and in like artificial manner set forth; seeing that errors the most widely different have nevertheless causes for the most part alike. Neither again do I mean this only of entire systems, but also of many principles and axioms in science, which by tradition, credulity, and negligence, have come to be received.

But of these several kinds of idols I must speak more largely and exactly, that the understanding may be duly cautioned.

The human understanding is of its own nature prone to suppose the existence of more order and regularity in the world than it finds. And though there be many things in nature which are singular and unmatched, yet it devises for them parallels and conjugates and relatives¹² which do not exist. Hence the fiction that all celestial bodies move in perfect circles; spirals and dragons being (except in name) utterly rejected. Hence too the element of fire with its orb is brought in, to make up the square with the other three which the sense perceives. Hence also the ratio of density¹³ of the so-called elements is arbitrarily fixed at ten to one. And so on of other dreams. And these fancies affect not dogmas only, but simple notions also.

The human understanding when it has once adopted an opinion (either as being the received opinion or as being agreeable to itself) draws all things else to support and agree with it. And though there be a greater number and weight of instances to be found on the other side, yet these it either neglects and despises, or else by some distinction sets aside and rejects; in order that by this great and pernicious predetermination the authority of its former conclusions may remain inviolate. And therefore it was a good answer that was made by one who when they showed him hanging in a temple a picture of those who had paid their vows as having escaped shipwreck, and would have him say whether he did not now acknowledge the power of the gods — “Ay,” asked he again, “but where are they painted that were drowned after their vows?” And such is the way of all superstition, whether in astrology, dreams, omens, divine judgments, or the like; wherein men having a delight in such vanities, mark the events where they

are fulfilled, but where they fail, though this happen much oftener, neglect and pass them by. But with far more subtlety does this mischief insinuate itself into philosophy and the sciences; in which the first conclusion colors and brings into conformity with itself all that come after, though far sounder and better. Besides, independently of that delight and vanity which I have described, it is the peculiar and perpetual error of the human intellect to be more moved and excited by affirmatives than by negatives; whereas it ought properly to hold itself indifferently disposed towards both alike. Indeed, in the establishment of any true axiom, the negative instance is the more forcible of the two.

The human understanding is moved by those things most which strike and enter the mind simultaneously and suddenly, and so fill the imagination; and then it feigns and supposes all other things to be somehow, though it cannot see how, similar to those few things by which it is surrounded. But for that going to and fro to remote and heterogeneous instances, by which axioms are tried as in the fire,¹⁴ the intellect is altogether slow and unfit, unless it be forced thereto by severe laws and overruling authority.

The human understanding is unquiet; it cannot stop or rest, and still presses onward, but in vain. Therefore it is that we cannot conceive of any end or limit to the world, but always as of necessity it occurs to us that there is something beyond. Neither again can it be conceived how eternity has flowed down to the present day; for that distinction which is commonly received of infinity in time past and in time to come can by no means hold; for it would thence follow that one infinity is greater than another, and

that infinity is wasting away and tending to become finite. The like subtlety arises touching the infinite divisibility of lines,¹⁵ from the same inability of thought to stop. But this inability interferes more mischievously in the discovery of causes:¹⁶ for although the most general principles in nature ought to be held merely positive, as they are discovered, and cannot with truth be referred to a cause; nevertheless, the human understanding being unable to rest still seeks something prior in the order of nature. And then it is that in struggling towards that which is further off, it falls back upon that which is more nigh at hand; namely, on final causes: which have relation clearly to the nature of man rather than to the nature of the universe, and from this source have strangely defiled philosophy. But he is no less an unskilled and shallow philosopher who seeks causes of that which is most general, than he who in things subordinate and subaltern¹⁷ omits to do so.

The human understanding is no dry light, but receives an infusion from the will and affections;¹⁸ whence proceed sciences which may be called “sciences as one would.” For what a man had rather were true he more readily believes. Therefore he rejects difficult things from impatience of research; sober things, because they narrow hope; the deeper things of nature, from superstition; the light of experience, from arrogance and pride, lest his mind should seem to be occupied with things mean and transitory; things not commonly believed, out of deference to the opinion of the vulgar. Numberless in short are the ways, and sometimes imperceptible, in which the affections color and infect the understanding.

But by far the greatest hindrance and aberration of the human understanding proceeds from the dullness, incompetency, and deceptions of the senses; in that things which strike the sense outweigh things which do not immediately strike it, though they be more important. Hence it is that speculation commonly ceases where sight ceases; insomuch that of things invisible there is little or no observation. Hence all the working of the spirits¹⁹ enclosed in tangible bodies lies hid and unobserved of men. So also all the more subtle changes of form in the parts of coarser substances (which they commonly call alteration, though it is in truth local motion through exceedingly small spaces) is in like manner unobserved. And yet unless these two things just mentioned be searched out and brought to light, nothing great can be achieved in nature, as far as the production of works is concerned. So again the essential nature of our common air, and of all bodies less dense than air (which are very many) is almost unknown. For the sense by itself is a thing infirm and erring; neither can instruments for enlarging or sharpening the senses do much; but all the truer kind of interpretation of nature is effected by instances and experiments fit and apposite;²⁰ wherein the sense decides touching the experiment only, and the experiment touching the point in nature and the thing itself.

The human understanding is of its own nature prone to abstractions and gives a substance and reality to things which are fleeting.

I

The human understanding is of its own nature prone to abstractions and gives a substance and reality to things which are fleeting. But to resolve nature into abstractions is less to our purpose than to dissect her into parts; as did the school of Democritus,²¹ which went further into nature than the rest. Matter rather than forms should be the object of our attention, its configurations and changes of configuration, and simple action, and law of action or motion; for forms are figments of the human mind, unless you will call those laws of action forms.

Such then are the idols which I call *Idols of the Tribe*; and which take their rise either from the homogeneity of the substance of the human spirit,²² or from its preoccupation, or from its narrowness, or from its restless motion, or from an infusion of the affections, or from the incompetency of the senses, or from the mode of impression.

The *Idols of the Cave* take their rise in the peculiar constitution, mental or bodily, of each individual; and also in education, habit, and accident. Of this kind there is a great number and variety; but I will instance those the pointing out of which contains the most important caution, and which have most effect in disturbing the clearness of the understanding.

Men become attached to certain particular sciences and speculations, either because they fancy themselves the authors and inventors thereof, or because they have bestowed the

greatest pains upon them and become most habituated to them. But men of this kind, if they betake themselves to philosophy and contemplations of a general character, distort and color them in obedience to their former fancies; a thing especially to be noticed in Aristotle,²³ who made his natural philosophy²⁴ a mere bondservant to his logic, thereby rendering it contentious and well nigh useless. The race of chemists²⁵ again out of a few experiments of the furnace have built up a fantastic philosophy, framed with reference to a few things; and Gilbert²⁶ also, after he had employed himself most laboriously in the study and observation of the loadstone, proceeded at once to construct an entire system in accordance with his favorite subject.

There is one principal and, as it were, radical distinction between different minds, in respect of philosophy and the sciences, which is this: that some minds are stronger and apter to mark the differences of things, others to mark their resemblances. The steady and acute mind can fix its contemplations and dwell and fasten on the subtlest distinctions: the lofty and discursive mind recognizes and puts together the finest and most general resemblances. Both kinds however easily err in excess, by catching the one at gradations, the other at shadows.

There are found some minds given to an extreme admiration of antiquity, others to an extreme love and appetite for novelty; but few so duly tempered that they can hold the mean, neither carping at what has been well laid down by the ancients, nor despising what is well introduced by the moderns. This however turns to the great injury of the sciences and philosophy; since these

affectations of antiquity and novelty are the humors²⁷ of partisans rather than judgments; and truth is to be sought for not in the felicity of any age, which is an unstable thing, but in the light of nature and experience, which is eternal. These factions therefore must be abjured,²⁸ and care must be taken that the intellect be not hurried by them into assent.

Contemplations of nature and of bodies in their simple form break up and distract the understanding, while contemplations of nature and bodies in their composition and configuration overpower and dissolve the understanding: a distinction well seen in the school of Leucippus²⁹ and Democritus as compared with the other philosophies. For that school is so busied with the particles that it hardly attends to the structure; while the others are so lost in admiration of the structure that they do not penetrate to the simplicity of nature. These kinds of contemplation should therefore be alternated and taken by turns; that so the understanding may be rendered at once penetrating and comprehensive, and the inconveniences above mentioned, with the idols which proceed from them, may be avoided.

Let such then be our provision and contemplative prudence for keeping off and dislodging the *Idols of the Cave*, which grow for the most part either out of the predominance of a favorite subject, or out of an excessive tendency to compare or to distinguish, or out of partiality for particular ages, or out of the largeness or minuteness of the objects contemplated. And generally let every student of nature take this as a rule — that whatever his mind seizes and dwells upon with peculiar satisfaction is to be held in

suspicion, and that so much the more care is to be taken in dealing with such questions to keep the understanding even and clear.

But the *Idols of the Marketplace* are the most troublesome of all: idols which have crept into the understanding through the alliances of words and names. For men believe that their reason governs words; but it is also true that words react on the understanding; and this it is that has rendered philosophy and the sciences sophistical and inactive. Now words, being commonly framed and applied according to the capacity of the vulgar, follow those lines of division which are most obvious to the vulgar understanding. And whenever an understanding of greater acuteness or a more diligent observation would alter those lines to suit the true divisions of nature, words stand in the way and resist the change. Whence it comes to pass that the high and formal discussions of learned men end oftentimes in disputes about words and names; with which (according to the use and wisdom of the mathematicians) it would be more prudent to begin, and so by means of definitions reduce them to order. Yet even definitions cannot cure this evil in dealing with natural and material things; since the definitions themselves consist of words, and those words beget others: so that it is necessary to recur to individual instances, and those in due series and order; as I shall say presently when I come to the method and scheme for the formation of notions and axioms.³⁰

The idols imposed by words on the understanding are of two kinds. They are either names of things which do not exist (for as

there are things left unnamed through lack of observation, so likewise are there names which result from fantastic suppositions and to which nothing in reality responds), or they are names of things which exist, but yet confused and ill-defined, and hastily and irregularly derived from realities. Of the former kind are Fortune, the Prime Mover, Planetary Orbits, Element of Fire, and like fictions which owe their origin to false and idle theories.³¹ And this class of idols is more easily expelled, because to get rid of them it is only necessary that all theories should be steadily rejected and dismissed as obsolete.

But the other class, which springs out of a faulty and unskillful abstraction, is intricate and deeply rooted. Let us take for example such a word as *humid*, and see how far the several things which the word is used to signify agree with each other; and we shall find the word *humid* to be nothing else than a mark loosely and confusedly applied to denote a variety of actions which will not bear to be reduced to any constant meaning. For it both signifies that which easily spreads itself round any other body; and that which in itself is indeterminate and cannot solidize; and that which readily yields in every direction; and that which easily divides and scatters itself; and that which easily unites and collects itself; and that which readily flows and is put in motion; and that which readily clings to another body and wets it; and that which is easily reduced to a liquid, or being solid easily melts. Accordingly when you come to apply the word — if you take it in one sense, flame is humid; if in another, air is not humid; if in another, fine dust is humid; if in another, glass is humid. So that it is easy to see that

the notion is taken by abstraction only from water and common and ordinary liquids, without any due verification.

There are however in words certain degrees of distortion and error. One of the least faulty kinds is that of names of substances, especially of lowest species and well-deduced (for the notion of *chalk* and of *mud* is good, of *earth* bad);³² a more faulty kind is that of actions, as *to generate*, *to corrupt*, *to alter*; the most faulty is of qualities (except such as are the immediate objects of the sense), as *heavy*, *light*, *rare*, *dense*, and the like. Yet in all these cases some notions are of necessity a little better than others, in proportion to the greater variety of subjects that fall within the range of the human sense.

But the *Idols of the Theater* are not innate, nor do they steal into the understanding secretly, but are plainly impressed and received into the mind from the play-books of philosophical systems and the perverted rules of demonstration.³³ To attempt refutations in this case would be merely inconsistent with what I have already said: for since we agree neither upon principles nor upon demonstrations, there is no place for argument. And this is so far well, inasmuch as it leaves the honor of the ancients untouched. For they are no wise disparaged — the question between them and me being only as to the way. For as the saying is, the lame man who keeps the right road outstrips the runner who takes a wrong one. Nay, it is obvious that when a man runs the wrong way, the more active and swift he is the further he will go astray.

But the course I propose for the discovery of sciences is such as leaves but little to the acuteness and strength of wits, but places all wits³⁴ and understandings nearly on a level. For as in the drawing of a straight line or perfect circle, much depends on the steadiness and practice of the hand, if it be done by aim of hand only, but if with the aid of rule or compass, little or nothing; so is it exactly with my plan. But though particular confutations³⁵ would be of no avail, yet touching the sects and general divisions of such systems I must say something; something also touching the external signs which show that they are unsound; and finally something touching the causes of such great infelicity and of such lasting and general agreement in error; that so the access to truth may be made less difficult, and the human understanding may the more willingly submit to its purgation and dismiss its idols.

Idols of the Theater, or of systems, are many, and there can be and perhaps will be yet many more. For were it not that now for many ages men's minds have been busied with religion and theology; and were it not that civil governments, especially monarchies, have been averse to such novelties, even in matters speculative; so that men labor therein to the peril and harming of their fortunes — not only unrewarded, but exposed also to contempt and envy; doubtless there would have arisen many other philosophical sects like to those which in great variety flourished once among the Greeks. For as on the phenomena of the heavens many hypotheses may be constructed, so likewise (and more also) many various dogmas may be set up and established on the phenomena of philosophy. And in the plays of this philosophical theater you may observe the same thing which

is found in the theater of the poets, that stories invented for the stage are more compact and elegant, and more as one would wish them to be, than true stories out of history.

In general, however, there is taken for the material of philosophy either a great deal out of a few things, or a very little out of many things; so that on both sides philosophy is based on too narrow a foundation of experiment and natural history, and decides on the authority of too few cases. For the rational school of philosophers³⁶ snatches from experience a variety of common instances, neither duly ascertained nor diligently examined and weighed, and leaves all the rest to meditation and agitation of wit.

There is also another class of philosophers,³⁷ who having bestowed much diligent and careful labor on a few experiments, have thence made bold to educe and construct systems; wresting all other facts in a strange fashion to conformity therewith.

And there is yet a third class,³⁸ consisting of those who out of faith and veneration mix their philosophy with theology and traditions; among whom the vanity of some has gone so far aside as to seek the origin of sciences among spirits and genii.³⁹ So that this parent stock of errors — this false philosophy — is of three kinds: the sophistical, the empirical, and the superstitious....

But the corruption of philosophy by superstition and an admixture of theology is far more widely spread, and does the greatest harm, whether to entire systems or to their parts. For the human understanding is obnoxious to the influence of the imagination no

less than to the influence of common notions. For the contentious and sophistical kind of philosophy ensnares the understanding; but this kind, being fanciful and tumid⁴⁰ and half poetical, misleads it more by flattery. For there is in man an ambition of the understanding, no less than of the will, especially in high and lofty spirits.

Of this kind we have among the Greeks a striking example in Pythagoras, though he united with it a coarser and more cumbrous superstition; another in Plato and his school,⁴¹ more dangerous and subtle. It shows itself likewise in parts of other philosophies, in the introduction of abstract forms and final causes and first causes, with the omission in most cases of causes intermediate, and the like. Upon this point the greatest caution should be used. For nothing is so mischievous as the apotheosis of error; and it is a very plague of the understanding for vanity to become the object of veneration. Yet in this vanity some of the moderns have with extreme levity indulged so far as to attempt to found a system of natural philosophy on the first chapter of - Genesis, on the book of Job, and other parts of the sacred writings; seeking for the dead among the living: which also makes the inhibition and repression of it the more important, because from this unwholesome mixture of things human and divine there arises not only a fantastic philosophy but also an heretical religion. Very meet it is therefore that we be sober-minded, and give to faith that only which is faith's....

So much concerning the several classes of Idols, and their equipage: all of which must be renounced and put away with a

fixed and solemn determination, and the understanding thoroughly freed and cleansed; the entrance into the kingdom of man, founded on the sciences, being not much other than the entrance into the kingdom of heaven, whereunto none may enter except as a little child.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. Which of Bacon's idols is the most difficult to understand? Do your best to define it.
2. Which of these idols do we still need to worry about? Why? What dangers does it present?
3. What does Bacon mean by implying that our senses are weak ([para. 14](#))? In what ways do you agree or disagree with that opinion?
4. Occasionally Bacon says something that seems a bit like an aphorism (see the introduction to Machiavelli, [p. 84](#)). Find at least one such expression in this selection. On examination, does the expression have as much meaning as it seems to have?
5. What kind of readers did Bacon expect for this piece? What clues does his way of communicating provide regarding the nature of his anticipated readers?

SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Which of Bacon's idols most seriously affects the way you as a person observe nature? Using enumeration, arrange the idols in order of their effect on your own judgment. If you prefer, you may write about the idol you believe is most effective in slowing investigation into nature.
2. Is it true, as Bacon says in [paragraph 10](#), that people are in general "more moved and excited by affirmatives than by negatives"? Do we

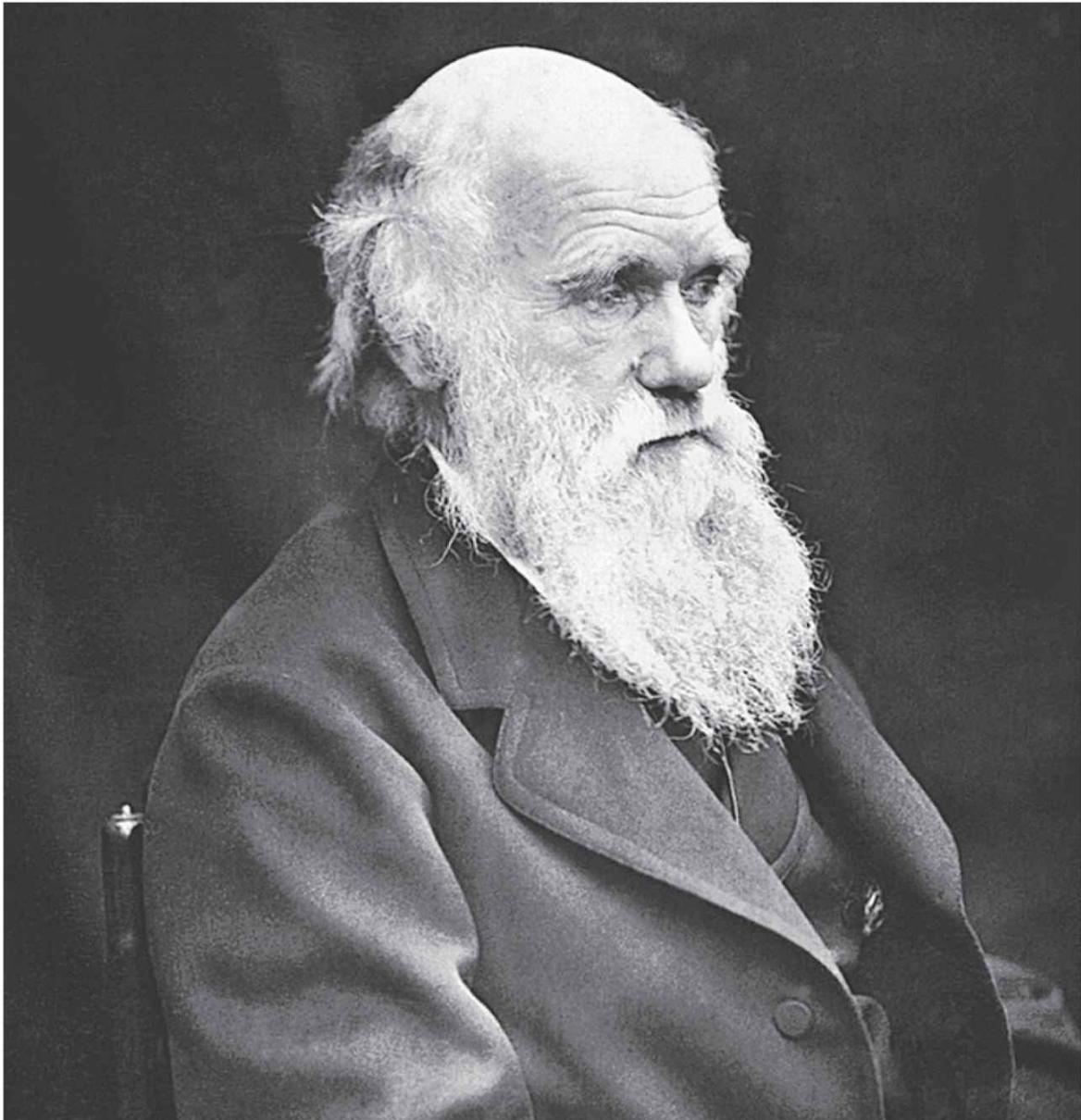
really stress the positive and de-emphasize the negative in the conduct of our general affairs? Find at least three instances in which people seem to gravitate toward the positive or the negative in everyday situations. Try to establish whether Bacon has, in fact, described what is a habit of mind.

3. In [paragraph 13](#), Bacon states that the “will and affections” enter into matters of thought. By this he means that our understanding of what we observe is conditioned by what we want and what we feel. Thus, when he says, “For what a man had rather were true he more readily believes,” he tells us that people tend to believe what they want to believe. Test this statement by means of observation. Find out, for example, how many older people are convinced that the world is deteriorating, how many younger people feel that there is a plot on the part of older people to hold them back, how many women feel that men consciously oppress women, and how many men feel that feminists are not as feminine as they should be. What other beliefs can you discover that seem to have their origin in what people want to believe rather than in what is true?
4. Bacon’s views on religion have always been difficult to define. He grew up in a very religious time, but his writings rarely discuss religion positively. In this work, he talks about giving “to faith that only which is faith’s” ([para. 34](#)). He seems to feel that scientific investigation is something quite separate from religion. Examine the selection carefully to determine what you think Bacon’s view on this question is. Then take a stand on the issue of the relationship between religion and science. Should science be totally independent of religious concerns? Should religious issues control scientific experimentation? What does Bacon mean when he complains about the vanity of founding “a system of natural philosophy on the first chapter of Genesis, on the book of Job, and other parts of the sacred writings” ([para. 34](#))? “Natural philosophy” means biology, chemistry, physics, and science in general. Are Bacon’s complaints justified? Would his complaints be relevant today?

1. How has the reception of Charles Darwin's work been affected by a general inability of the public to see beyond Bacon's four idols? Read Darwin's essay ("[Natural Selection](#)") and that of Ruth Moore ("[Evolution Revised](#)"). Which of these two writers is more concerned with the lingering effects of the four idols? Do you feel that the effects have seriously affected people's beliefs regarding Darwinian theory?
2. Both Rachel Carson ("[The Obligation to Endure](#)") and James Gleick ("[What is Time?](#)") discuss the value of science in the modern world. Which of the four idols do these two modern writers see as most problematic to establishing a full understanding of how science must be understood today? In what way are these modern authors in debt to the work of Francis Bacon? How might they talk about the problems of coming to an understanding of the truth about science today? Write an essay based on the structure of Bacon's essay but reflecting the concerns of both Carson and Gleick.
3. Rachel Carson asks how intelligent people could have sprayed so many lethal chemicals into the environment despite warnings that they would remain in the soil for hundreds of years. Which of the four idols in Bacon's essay is most responsible for the inability of people to act in accord with the best research and best advice regarding the health of the environment? What has Bacon to tell us about the failures of reasonable people when it comes to doing the right thing for nature?



Charles Darwin *Natural Selection*



Time Life Pictures/Mansell/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images

CHARLES DARWIN (1809–1882) was trained as a minister in the Church of England, but he was also the grandson of one of England's greatest horticulturists, Erasmus Darwin. Partly as a way of putting off ordination in the church and partly because of his natural curiosity, Darwin found himself performing the functions of a naturalist on HMS *Beagle*, which was engaged in scientific

explorations around South America during the years 1831 to 1836. Darwin's book *Journal of Researches into the Geology and Natural History of the Various Countries Visited by H. M. S. Beagle, 1832–36* (1839) details the experiences he had and offers some views of his self-education as a naturalist.

His journeys on the *Beagle* led him to note variations in species of animals he found in diverse locales, particularly between remote islands and the mainland. Varieties — his term for any visible (or invisible) differences in markings, coloration, size, or shape of appendages, organs, or bodies — were of some peculiar use, he believed, for animals in the environment in which he found them. He was not certain about the use of these varieties, and he did not know whether the changes that created the varieties resulted from the environment or from some chance operation of nature. Ultimately, he concluded that varieties in nature were caused by three forces: (1) natural selection, in which varieties occur spontaneously by chance but are then “selected for” because they are aids to survival; (2) direct action of the environment, in which nonadaptive varieties do not survive because of climate, food conditions, or the like; and (3) the effects of use or disuse of a variation (for example, the short beak of a bird mentioned in [para. 9](#)). Darwin later regarded sexual selection, which figures prominently in this work, as less significant.

The idea of evolution — the gradual change of species through some kind of modification of varieties — had been in the air for many years when Darwin began his work. The English scientists W. C. Wells in 1813 and Patrick Matthew in 1831 had both

proposed theories of natural selection, although Darwin was unaware of their work. Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913), a younger English scientist, revealed in 1858 that he was about to propose the same theory of evolution as was Darwin. They jointly published brief versions of their theories in 1858, and the next year Darwin rushed the final version of his book *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* to press.

Darwin did not mention human beings as part of the evolutionary process in *On the Origin of Species*; because he was particularly concerned about the probable adverse reactions of theologians, he merely promised later discussion of that subject. It came in *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), the companion to *On the Origin of Species*.

When Darwin returned to England after completing his research on the *Beagle*, he supplemented his knowledge with information gathered from breeders of pigeons, livestock, dogs, and horses. This research, it must be noted, involved relatively few samples and was conducted according to comparatively unscientific practices. Despite its limitations, it corresponded with his observations of nature. Humans could and did cause changes in species; Darwin's task was to show that nature — through the process of natural selection — could do the same thing.

The Descent of Man stirred up a great deal of controversy between the church and Darwin's supporters. Not since the Roman Catholic Church denied the fact that the earth went around the sun, which Galileo proved scientifically by 1632 (and

was placed under house arrest for his pains), had there been a more serious confrontation between science and religion in the West. Darwin was ridiculed by ministers and doubted by older scientists; but his views were stoutly defended by younger scientists, many of whom had arrived at similar conclusions. In the end, Darwin's views were accepted by the Church of England, and when he died in 1882 he was lionized and buried at Westminster Abbey in London. Although evolution underpins most of modern biology and many other scientific fields, Darwin's work continues to be contested outside of scientific spheres, again due to how the theory of evolution intersects with religious understandings of human origin.

DARWIN'S RHETORIC

Despite the complexity of the material it deals with, Darwin's writing is fluent, smooth, and stylistically sophisticated and keeps the reader engaged. Darwin's rhetorical method depends entirely on the yoking of thesis and demonstration. He uses definition frequently, but most often he uses testimony, gathering information and instances, both real and imaginary, from many different sources.

Interestingly enough, Darwin claimed that he used Francis Bacon's method of induction in his research, gathering evidence of many instances of a given phenomenon, from which the truth — or a natural law — emerges. In fact, Darwin did not quite follow this path. Like most modern scientists, he established a hypothesis after a period of observation, and then he looked for

evidence that confirmed or refuted the hypothesis. He was careful to include examples that argued against his view, but like most scientists, he emphasized the importance of the supportive samples.

Induction plays a part in the rhetoric of this selection in that it is dominated by examples from bird breeding, birds in nature, domestic farm animals and their breeding, and botany, including the breeding of plants and the interdependence of certain insects and certain plants. Erasmus Darwin was famous for his work with plants, and it is natural that such observations would play an important part in his grandson's thinking.

The process of natural selection is carefully discussed, particularly in [paragraph 8](#) and thereafter. Darwin emphasizes its positive nature and its differences from selection by human breeders. The use of comparison, which appears frequently in the selection, is most conspicuous in these paragraphs. He postulates a nature in which the fittest survive because they are best adapted for survival, but he does not dwell on the fate of those who are unfit individuals. It was left to later writers, often misapplying his theories, to do that.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Charles Darwin's "Natural Selection." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What is the basic principle of natural selection?

2. How does “human” selection differ from nature’s selection?

From *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. This text is from the first edition, published in 1859. In the five subsequent editions, Darwin hedged more and more on his theory, often introducing material in defense against objections. The first edition is vigorous and direct; this edition jolted the worlds of science and religion out of their complacency. In later editions, this chapter was titled “Natural Selection; or, Survival of the Fittest.”

Natural Selection

How will the struggle for existence ... act in regard to variation? Can the principle of selection, which we have seen is so potent in the hands of man, apply in nature? I think we shall see that it can act most effectually. Let it be borne in mind in what an endless number of strange peculiarities our domestic productions, and, in a lesser degree, those under nature, vary; and how strong the hereditary tendency is. Under domestication, it may be truly said that the whole organization becomes in some degree plastic.¹ Let it be borne in mind how infinitely complex and close-fitting are the mutual relations of all organic beings to each other and to their physical conditions of life. Can it, then, be thought improbable, seeing that variations useful to man have undoubtedly occurred, that other variations useful in some way to each being in the great and complex battle of life, should sometimes occur in the course of thousands of generations? If such do occur, can we doubt (remembering that many more individuals are born than can possibly survive) that individuals having any advantage, however slight, over others, would have the best chance of surviving and of procreating their kind? On the other hand, we may feel sure that any variation in the least degree injurious would be rigidly destroyed. This preservation of favorable variations and the rejection of injurious variations, I call Natural Selection. Variations neither useful nor injurious would not be affected by natural selection, and would be left a fluctuating element, as perhaps we see in the species called polymorphic.²

We shall best understand the probable course of natural selection by taking the case of a country undergoing some physical change, for instance, of climate. The proportional numbers of its inhabitants would almost immediately undergo a change, and some species might become extinct. We may conclude, from what we have seen of the intimate and complex manner in which the inhabitants of each country are bound together, that any change in the numerical proportions of some of the inhabitants, independently of the change of climate itself, would most seriously affect many of the others. If the country were open on its borders, new forms would certainly immigrate, and this also would seriously disturb the relations of some of the former inhabitants. Let it be remembered how powerful the influence of a single introduced tree or mammal has been shown to be. But in the case of an island, or of a country partly surrounded by barriers, into which new and better adapted forms could not freely enter, we should then have places in the economy of nature which would assuredly be better filled up, if some of the original inhabitants were in some manner modified; for, had the area been open to immigration, these same places would have been seized on by intruders. In such case, every slight modification, which in the course of ages chanced to arise, and which in any way favored the individuals of any of the species, by better adapting them to their altered conditions, would tend to be preserved; and natural selection would thus have free scope for the work of improvement.

We have reason to believe ... that a change in the conditions of life, by specially acting on the reproductive system, causes or increases variability; and in the foregoing case the conditions of

life are supposed to have undergone a change, and this would manifestly be favorable to natural selection, by giving a better chance of profitable variations occurring; and unless profitable variations do occur, natural selection can do nothing. Not that, as I believe, any extreme amount of variability is necessary; as man can certainly produce great results by adding up in any given direction mere individual differences, so could Nature, but far more easily, from having incomparably longer time at her disposal. Nor do I believe that any great physical change, as of climate, or any unusual degree of isolation to check immigration, is actually necessary to produce new and unoccupied places for natural selection to fill up by modifying and improving some of the varying inhabitants. For as all the inhabitants of each country are struggling together with nicely balanced forces, extremely slight modifications in the structure or habits of one inhabitant would often give it an advantage over others; and still further modifications of the same kind would often still further increase the advantage. No country can be named in which all the native inhabitants are now so perfectly adapted to each other and to the physical conditions under which they live, that none of them could anyhow be improved; for in all countries, the natives have been so far conquered by naturalized productions, that they have allowed foreigners to take firm possession of the land. And as foreigners have thus everywhere beaten some of the natives, we may safely conclude that the natives might have been modified with advantage, so as to have better resisted such intruders.

As man can produce and certainly has produced a great result by his methodical and unconscious means of selection, what may not

nature effect? Man can act only on external and visible characters; nature cares nothing for appearances, except in so far as they may be useful to any being. She can act on every internal organ, on every shade of constitutional difference, on the whole machinery of life. Man selects only for his own good; Nature only for that of the being which she tends. Every selected character is fully exercised by her; and the being is placed under well-suited conditions of life. Man keeps the natives of many climates in the same country; he seldom exercises each selected character in some peculiar and fitting manner; he feeds a long and a short beaked pigeon on the same food; he does not exercise a long-backed or long-legged quadruped in any peculiar manner; he exposes sheep with long and short wool to the same climate. He does not allow the most vigorous males to struggle for the females. He does not rigidly destroy all inferior animals, but protects during each varying season, as far as lies in his power, all his productions. He often begins his selection by some half-monstrous form; or at least by some modification prominent enough to catch the eye, or to be plainly useful to him. Under nature, the slightest difference of structure or constitution may well turn the nicely balanced scale in the struggle for life, and so be preserved. How fleeting are the wishes and efforts of man! how short his time! and consequently how poor will his products be, compared with those accumulated by nature during whole geological periods. Can we wonder, then, that nature's productions should be far "truer" in character than man's productions; that they should be infinitely better adapted to the most complex conditions of life, and should plainly bear the stamp of far higher workmanship?

It may be said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinizing, throughout the world, every variation, even the slightest; rejecting that which is bad, preserving and adding up all that is good; silently and insensibly working, whenever and wherever opportunity offers, at the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life. We see nothing of these slow changes in progress, until the hand of time has marked the long lapse of ages, and then so imperfect is our view into long past geological ages, that we only see that the forms of life are now different from what they formerly were.

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Although natural selection can act only through and for the good of each being, yet characters and structures, which we are apt to consider as of very trifling importance, may thus be acted on. When we see leaf-eating insects green, and bark-feeders mottled-grey; the alpine ptarmigan white in winter, the red-grouse the color of heather, and the black-grouse that of peaty earth, we must believe that these tints are of service to these birds and insects in

preserving them from danger. Grouse, if not destroyed at some period of their lives, would increase in countless numbers; they are known to suffer largely from birds of prey; and hawks are guided by eyesight to their prey — so much so that on parts of the Continent³ persons are warned not to keep white pigeons, as being the most liable to destruction. Hence I can see no reason to doubt that natural selection might be most effective in giving the proper color to each kind of grouse, and in keeping that color, when once acquired, true and constant. Nor ought we to think that the occasional destruction of an animal of any particular color would produce little effect; we should remember how essential it is in a flock of white sheep to destroy every lamb with the faintest trace of black. In plants, the down on the fruit and the color of the flesh are considered by botanists as characters of the most trifling importance; yet we hear from an excellent horticulturist, Downing,⁴ that in the United States, smooth-skinned fruits suffer far more from a beetle, a curculio,⁵ than those with down; that purple plums suffer far more from a certain disease than yellow plums; whereas another disease attacks yellow-fleshed peaches far more than those with other colored flesh. If, with all the aids of art, these slight differences make a great difference in cultivating the several varieties, assuredly, in a state of nature, where the trees would have to struggle with other trees and with a host of enemies, such differences would effectually settle which variety, whether a smooth or downy, a yellow or purple fleshed fruit, should succeed.

In looking at many small points of difference between species, which, as far as our ignorance permits us to judge, seem to be quite unimportant, we must not forget that climate, food, etc.,

probably produce some slight and direct effect. It is, however, far more necessary to bear in mind that there are many unknown laws of correlation⁶ of growth, which, when one part of the organization is modified through variation and the modifications are accumulated by natural selection for the good of the being, will cause other modifications, often of the most unexpected nature.

As we see that those variations which under domestication appear at any particular period of life, tend to reappear in the offspring at the same period — for instance, in the seeds of the many varieties of our culinary and agricultural plants; in the caterpillar and cocoon stages of the varieties of the silkworm; in the eggs of poultry, and in the color of the down of their chickens; in the horns of our sheep and cattle when nearly adult — so in a state of nature, natural selection will be enabled to act on and modify organic beings at any age, by the accumulation of profitable variations at that age, and by their inheritance at a corresponding age. If it profit a plant to have its seeds more and more widely disseminated by the wind, I can see no greater difficulty in this being effected through natural selection than in the cotton-planter increasing and improving by selection the down in the pods on his cotton-trees. Natural selection may modify and adapt the larva of an insect to a score of contingencies, wholly different from those which concern the mature insect. These modifications will no doubt effect, through the laws of correlation, the structure of the adult; and probably in the case of those insects which live only for a few hours, and which never feed, a large part of their structure is merely the correlated result of successive changes in the structure of their larvae. So, conversely, modifications in the adult will

probably often affect the structure of the larva; but in all cases natural selection will ensure that modifications consequent on other modifications at a different period of life, shall not be in the least degree injurious: for if they became so, they would cause the extinction of the species.

Natural selection will modify the structure of the young in relation to the parent, and of the parent in relation to the young. In social animals it will adapt the structure of each individual for the benefit of the community, if each in consequence profits by the selected change. What natural selection cannot do is to modify the structure of one species, without giving it any advantage, for the good of another species; and though statements to this effect may be found in works of natural history, I cannot find one case which will bear investigation. A structure used only once in an animal's whole life, if of high importance to it, might be modified to any extent by natural selection; for instance, the great jaws possessed by certain insects, and used exclusively for opening the cocoon — or the hard tip to the beak of nestling birds, used for breaking the egg. It has been asserted that of the best short-beaked tumbler-pigeons, more perish in the egg than are able to get out of it; so that fanciers⁷ assist in the act of hatching. Now, if nature had to make the beak of a full-grown pigeon very short for the bird's own advantage, the process of modification would be very slow, and there would be simultaneously the most rigorous selection of the young birds within the egg, which had the most powerful and hardest beaks, for all with weak beaks would inevitably perish; or, more delicate and more easily broken shells might be selected,

the thickness of the shell being known to vary like every other structure.

Sexual Selection

Inasmuch as peculiarities often appear under domestication in one sex and become hereditarily attached to that sex, the same fact probably occurs under nature, and if so, natural selection will be able to modify one sex in its functional relations to the other sex, or in relation to wholly different habits of life in the two sexes, as is sometimes the case with insects. And this leads me to say a few words on what I call Sexual Selection. This depends, not on a struggle for existence, but on a struggle between the males for possession of the females; the result is not death to the unsuccessful competitor, but few or no offspring. Sexual selection is, therefore, less rigorous than natural selection. Generally, the most vigorous males, those which are best fitted for their places in nature, will leave most progeny. But in many cases, victory will depend not on general vigor, but on having special weapons, confined to the male sex. A hornless stag or spurless cock would have a poor chance of leaving offspring. Sexual selection by always allowing the victor to breed might surely give indomitable courage, length to the spur, and strength to the wing to strike in the spurred leg, as well as the brutal cock fighter,⁸ who knows well that he can improve his breed by careful selection of the best cocks. How low in the scale of nature this law of battle descends, I know not; male alligators have been described as fighting, bellowing, and whirling round, like Indians in a wardance, for the possession of the females; male salmons have been seen fighting

all day long; male stag-beetles often bear wounds from the huge mandibles⁹ of other males. The war is, perhaps, severest between the males of polygamous animals,¹⁰ and these seem oftenest provided with special weapons. The males of carnivorous animals are already well armed; though to them and to others, special means of defense may be given through means of sexual selection, as the mane to the lion, the shoulder-pad to the boar, and the hooked jaw to the male salmon; for the shield may be as important for victory as the sword or spear.

Among birds, the contest is often of a more peaceful character. All those who have attended to the subject believe that there is the severest rivalry between the males of many species to attract, by singing, the females. The rock-thrush of Guiana,¹¹ birds of paradise, and some others, congregate; and successive males display their gorgeous plumage and perform strange antics before the females, which standing by as spectators, at last choose the most attractive partner. Those who have closely attended to birds in confinement well know that they often take individual preferences and dislikes: thus Sir R. Heron¹² has described how one pied peacock was eminently attractive to all his hen birds. It may appear childish to attribute any effect to such apparently weak means: I cannot here enter on the details necessary to support this view; but if man can in a short time give elegant carriage and beauty to his bantams,¹³ according to his standard of beauty, I can see no good reason to doubt that female birds, by selecting, during thousands of generations, the most melodious or beautiful males, according to their standard of beauty, might produce a marked effect. I strongly suspect that some well-known

laws with respect to the plumage of male and female birds, in comparison with the plumage of the young, can be explained on the view of plumage having been chiefly modified by sexual selection, acting when the birds have come to the breeding age or during the breeding season; the modifications thus produced being inherited at corresponding ages or seasons, either by the males alone, or by the males and females; but I have not space here to enter on this subject.

Thus it is, as I believe, that when the males and females of any animal have the same general habits of life, but differ in structure, color, or ornament, such differences have been mainly caused by sexual selection; that is, individual males have had, in successive generations, some slight advantage over other males, in their weapons, means of defense, or charms; and have transmitted these advantages to their male offspring. Yet, I would not wish to attribute all such sexual differences to this agency: for we see peculiarities arising and becoming attached to the male sex in our domestic animals (as the wattle in male carriers, horn-like protuberances in the cocks of certain fowls, etc.), which we cannot believe to be either useful to the males in battle, or attractive to the females. We see analogous cases under nature, for instance, the tuft of hair on the breast of the turkey-cock, which can hardly be either useful or ornamental to this bird; indeed, had the tuft appeared under domestication, it would have been called a monstrosity.

Illustrations of the Action of Natural Selection

In order to make it clear how, as I believe, natural selection acts, I must beg permission to give one or two imaginary illustrations. Let us take the case of a wolf, which preys on various animals, securing some by craft, some by strength, and some by fleetness; and let us suppose that the fleetest prey, a deer for instance, had from any change in the country increased in numbers, or that other prey had decreased in numbers, during that season of the year when the wolf is hardest pressed for food. I can under such circumstances see no reason to doubt that the swiftest and slimmest wolves would have the best chance of surviving, and so be preserved or selected, provided always that they retained strength to master their prey at this or at some other period of the year, when they might be compelled to prey on other animals. I can see no more reason to doubt this, than that man can improve the fleetness of his greyhounds by careful and methodical selection, or by that unconscious selection which results from each man trying to keep the best dogs without any thought of modifying the breed.

Even without any change in the proportional numbers of the animals on which our wolf preyed, a cub might be born with an innate tendency to pursue certain kinds of prey. Nor can this be thought very improbable; for we often observe great differences in the natural tendencies of our domestic animals; one cat, for instance, taking to catch rats, another mice; one cat, according to Mr. St. John,¹⁴ bringing home winged game, another hares or rabbits, and another hunting on marshy ground and almost nightly catching woodcocks or snipes. The tendency to catch rats rather than mice is known to be inherited. Now, if any slight innate

change of habit or of structure benefited an individual wolf, it would have the best chance of surviving and of leaving offspring. Some of its young would probably inherit the same habits or structure, and by the repetition of this process, a new variety might be formed which would either supplant or coexist with the parent-form of wolf. Or, again, the wolves inhabiting a mountainous district, and those frequenting the lowlands, would naturally be forced to hunt different prey; and from the continued preservation of the individuals best fitted for the two sites, two varieties might slowly be formed. These varieties would cross and blend where they met; but to this subject of intercrossing we shall soon have to return. I may add, that, according to Mr. Pierce,¹⁵ there are two varieties of the wolf inhabiting the Catskill Mountains in the United States, one with a light greyhound-like form, which pursues deer, and the other more bulky, with shorter legs, which more frequently attacks the shepherd's flocks.

Let us now take a more complex case. Certain plants excrete a sweet juice, apparently for the sake of eliminating something injurious from their sap; this is effected by glands at the base of the stipules¹⁶ in some Leguminosae, and at the back of the leaf of the common laurel. This juice, though small in quantity, is greedily sought by insects. Let us now suppose a little sweet juice or nectar to be excreted by the inner bases of the petals of a flower. In this case insects in seeking the nectar would get dusted with pollen, and would certainly often transport the pollen from one flower to the stigma of another flower. The flowers of two distinct individuals of the same species would thus get crossed; and the act of crossing, we have good reason to believe (as will hereafter

be more fully alluded to), would produce very vigorous seedlings, which consequently would have the best chance of flourishing and surviving. Some of these seedlings would probably inherit the nectar-excreting power. Those individual flowers which had the largest glands or nectaries, and which excreted most nectar, would be oftenest visited by insects, and would be oftenest crossed; and so in the long-run would gain the upper hand. Those flowers, also, which had their stamens and pistils¹⁷ placed, in relation to the size and habits of the particular insects which visited them, so as to favor in any degree the transportal of their pollen from flower to flower, would likewise be favored or selected. We might have taken the case of insects visiting flowers for the sake of collecting pollen instead of nectar; and as pollen is formed for the sole object of fertilization, its destruction appears a simple loss to the plant; yet if a little pollen were carried, at first occasionally and then habitually, by the pollen-devouring insects from flower to flower, and a cross thus effected, although nine-tenths of the pollen were destroyed, it might still be a great gain to the plant; and those individuals which produced more and more pollen, and had larger and larger anthers,¹⁸ would be selected.

When our plant, by this process of the continued preservation or natural selection of more and more attractive flowers, had been rendered highly attractive to insects, they would, unintentionally on their part, regularly carry pollen from flower to flower; and that they can most effectually do this, I could easily show by many striking instances. I will give only one — not as a very striking case, but as likewise illustrating one step in the separation of the sexes of plants, presently to be alluded to. Some holly-trees bear

only male flowers, which have four stamens producing rather a small quantity of pollen, and a rudimentary pistil; other holly-trees bear only female flowers; these have a full-sized pistil, and four stamens with shrivelled anthers, in which not a grain of pollen can be detected. Having found a female tree exactly sixty yards from a male tree, I put the stigmas¹⁹ of twenty flowers, taken from different branches, under the microscope, and on all, without exception, there were pollen-grains, and on some a profusion of pollen. As the wind had set for several days from the female to the male tree, the pollen could not thus have been carried. The weather had been cold and boisterous, and therefore not favorable to bees; nevertheless every female flower which I examined had been effectually fertilized by the bees, accidentally dusted with pollen, having flown from tree to tree in search of nectar. But to return to our imaginary case: as soon as the plant had been rendered so highly attractive to insects that pollen was regularly carried from flower to flower, another process might commence. No naturalist doubts the advantage of what has been called the "physiological division of labor"; hence we may believe that it would be advantageous to a plant to produce stamens alone in one flower or on one whole plant, and pistils alone in another flower or on another plant. In plants under culture and placed under new conditions of life, sometimes the male organs and sometimes the female organs become more or less impotent; now if we suppose this to occur in ever so slight a degree under nature, then as pollen is already carried regularly from flower to flower, and as a more complete separation of the sexes of our plant would be advantageous on the principle of the division of labor, individuals with this tendency more and more increased,

would be continually favored or selected, until at last a complete separation of the sexes would be effected.

Let us now turn to the nectar-feeding insects in our imaginary case: we may suppose the plant of which we have been slowly increasing the nectar by continued selection, to be a common plant; and that certain insects depended in main part on its nectar for food. I could give many facts, showing how anxious bees are to save time; for instance, their habit of cutting holes and sucking the nectar at the bases of certain flowers, which they can, with a very little more trouble, enter by the mouth. Bearing such facts in mind, I can see no reason to doubt that an accidental deviation in the size and form of the body, or in the curvature and length of the proboscis,²⁰ etc., far too slight to be appreciated by us, might profit a bee or other insect, so that an individual so characterized would be able to obtain its food more quickly, and so have a better chance of living and leaving descendants. Its descendants would probably inherit a tendency to a similar slight deviation of structure. The tubes of the corollas²¹ of the common red and incarnate clovers (*Trifolium pratense* and *incarnatum*) do not on a hasty glance appear to differ in length; yet the hive-bee can easily suck the nectar out of the incarnate clover, but not out of the common red clover, which is visited by humble-bees²² alone; so that whole fields of the red clover offer in vain an abundant supply of precious nectar to the hive-bee. Thus it might be a great advantage to the hive-bee to have a slightly longer or differently constructed proboscis. On the other hand, I have found by experiment that the fertility of clover greatly depends on bees visiting and moving parts of the corolla, so as to push the pollen

on to the stigmatic surface. Hence, again, if humble-bees were to become rare in any country, it might be a great advantage to the red clover to have a shorter or more deeply divided tube to its corolla, so that the hive-bee could visit its flowers. Thus I can understand how a flower and a bee might slowly become, either simultaneously or one after the other, modified and adapted in the most perfect manner to each other, by the continued preservation of individuals presenting mutual and slightly favorable deviations of structure.

I am well aware that this doctrine of natural selection, exemplified in the above imaginary instances, is open to the same objections which were at first urged against Sir Charles Lyell's noble views²³ on "the modern changes of the earth, as illustrative of geology"; but we now very seldom hear the action, for instance, of the coast-waves, called a trifling and insignificant cause, when applied to the excavation of gigantic valleys or to the formation of the longest lines of inland cliffs. Natural selection can act only by the preservation and accumulation of infinitesimally small inherited modifications, each profitable to the preserved being; and as modern geology has almost banished such views as the excavation of a great valley by a single diluvial²⁴ wave, so will natural selection, if it be a true principle, banish the belief of the continued creation of new organic beings, or of any great and sudden modification in their structure.



QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. Darwin's metaphor "battle of life" ([para. 1](#)) introduces issues that might be thought extraneous to a scientific inquiry. What is the danger of using such a metaphor? What is the advantage of doing so?
2. Many religious groups reject Darwin's concept of natural selection, but they accept human selection in the form of controlled breeding. Why would there be such a difference between the two?
3. Do you feel that the theory of natural selection is a positive force? Could it be directed by divine power?
4. In this work, there is no reference to human beings in terms of the process of selection. How might the principles at work on animals also work on people? Do you think that Darwin assumes this?
5. When this chapter was published in a later edition, Darwin added to its title "Survival of the Fittest." What issues or emotions does that new title raise that "Natural Selection" does not?

■ ■ ■ SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. In [paragraph 13](#), Darwin uses imaginary examples. Compare the value of his genuine examples and these imaginary ones. How effective is the use of imaginary examples in an argument? What requirements should an imaginary example meet to be forceful in an argument? Do you find Darwin's imaginary examples to be strong or weak?
2. From [paragraph 14](#) on, Darwin discusses the process of modification of a species through its beginning in the modification of an individual. Explain, insofar as you understand the concept, how a species could be modified by a variation occurring in just one individual. In your explanation, use Darwin's rhetorical technique of the imaginary example.
3. Write an essay that takes as its thesis statement the following sentence from [paragraph 18](#): "Natural selection can act only by the preservation and accumulation of infinitesimally small inherited modifications, each profitable to the preserved being." Be sure to

examine the work carefully for other statements by Darwin that add strength, clarity, and meaning to this one. You may also employ the Darwinian device of presenting imaginary instances in your essay.

4. A controversy exists concerning the Darwinian theory of evolution. Explore your local or college library and the internet for up-to-date information on the creationist-evolutionist conflict in schools. Look up either or both terms to see what articles you can find. Define the controversy and take a stand on it. Use your knowledge of natural selection gained from this piece. Remember, too, that Darwin was trained as a minister of the church and was concerned about religious opinion.
5. When Darwin wrote this piece, he believed that sexual selection was of great importance in evolutionary changes in species. Assuming that this belief is true, establish the similarities between sexual selection in plants and animals and sexual selection, as you have observed it, in people. [Paragraphs 10–12](#) discuss this issue. Darwin does not discuss selection in human beings, but it is clear that physical and stylistic distinctions between the sexes have some bearing on selection. Assuming that to be true, what qualities in people (physical and mental) are likely to survive? Why?

CONNECTIONS

1. Which of Francis Bacon's four idols ("[The Four Idols](#)") would have made it most difficult for Darwin's contemporaries to accept the theory of evolution, despite the mass of evidence he presented? Do the idols interfere with people's ability to evaluate evidence?
2. Judith Lorber, in "[Paradoxes of Gender](#)", speaks about the question of the inferiority of the female gender. Write an essay in which you examine the possibility that Darwin's theories may have contributed to that conclusion. Or, by examining Darwin's ideas on natural selection write an essay that concludes that Darwin's theories support the idea that the female gender is superior. Is it possible to conclude from reading Darwin's theories that the genders are equal?

3. Andrew Carnegie in "[The Gospel of Wealth](#)" uses Darwin's theories to support his view that becoming immensely wealthy is explainable by the theory of evolution. In a brief essay, examine what Carnegie says and explain why his theory is either correct or incorrect. What conclusions do you come up with? How do your conclusions affect the way you plan to live your life? Do you admire Carnegie or do you think he is just using Darwin as an excuse for his own behavior? Is what he said in 1899 more or less relevant today?



Rachel Carson *The Obligation to Endure*



Alfred Eisenstaedt/The LIFE Picture Collection/ Getty Images

RACHEL CARSON (1907–1964) was educated at the Pennsylvania College for Women (now Chatham College) and Johns Hopkins University, where she received a master's degree in zoology in 1932. She continued her studies at the Marine Biological Laboratory of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute

in Massachusetts. After teaching biology at the University of Maryland, Carson joined the Bureau of Fisheries (now the United States Fish and Wildlife Service) in 1936. She became editor-in-chief of its publications in 1949. Her first best-selling book on science, *The Sea Around Us* (1951), earned her a National Book Award, among many other prizes. In 1952 she left government service to devote herself to research and writing. In *The Sea Around Us* (1951), Carson was not so much sounding an alarm as she was presenting a picture of a world that at the time was not known to the general public. Naturally, much has been discovered about the sea since the book's publication, but most of what Carson wrote is still quite relevant today. Indeed, when she wrote these pages she was a pioneer in oceanic ecology.

Although Rachel Carson was not a scientist, she was frequently praised for her science writing, which distinguished her from others in her field. She was a painstaking writer who, by her own admission, wrote late into the night and subjected her work to many revisions. In addition to magazine articles, she wrote a number of books, including *Under the Sea-Wind: A Naturalist's Picture of Ocean Life* (1941), *The Edge of the Sea* (1955), and *Silent Spring* (1962). She was eventually elected to the British Royal Society of Literature and the American Institute of Arts and Letters.

Her most successful book, *Silent Spring*, brought to the attention of the nation and the world the harmful effects of widespread use of pesticides. It sold more than 500,000 copies, which astonished Carson, and which was far more than the norm for books on

environmental topics at the time. The book had an enormous influence on the curtailment of the use of pesticides such as DDT, which had wreaked havoc on numerous species, especially birds. Only in recent years have some species begun to recover to normal populations.

When she wrote *Silent Spring*, Carson realized that many scientists knew that the long-term effects of the pesticides they were developing would be devastating. The reason for their silence, according to Carson, was clear: the insecticide manufacturers supported entomologists with generous research grants, essentially “buying off” the very scientists who might have made a difference by informing the public about the dangers of spraying. This problematic intersection of science and industry, which at its best leads to the implementation of scientific innovations, is still seen today in debates around climate change, pharmaceuticals, fast food, and other topics.

CARSON’S RHETORIC

Carson was praised for her ability to communicate matters of science to a wide audience. In college, she was an English major before she switched to biology; her rhetorical style, although not specifically literary in this essay, is characterized by careful writing, vivid description, and metaphors designed to move, as well as inform, her audience. Her technique is straightforward. After establishing the historical relationship of living things and the environment, Carson tells us that over the hundreds of millions of years of life on earth things have been reversed. Historically, the

environment has shaped life, but today we are shaping the environment.

The Silent Spring (1962) created a nationwide sensation because the widespread use of DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane), which had been thought of as harmless and marvelously effective, was shown to be lethal in ways no one anticipated. For one thing, it had already been seen as obviously lethal in eradicating desirable insects like fireflies, but it had also had a terrible effect on songbirds — which is one reason why the spring season had become silent. Moreover, Carson was a leader in explaining that DDT remained in the environment for many years. As she says in her essay, it was showing up everywhere from our food to our cells. After the publication of her book, DDT became much less frequently used and was actually banned in many places. Today we look to Rachel Carson as the spearhead of the ecological movement in the United States and elsewhere. Because she was able to write so clearly and effectively, her message was effective even on politicians who otherwise would have ignored the seriousness of our situation.

In this selection, “The Obligation to Endure,” she begins by discussing one of the major issues in the early 1960s, nuclear fallout. In 1962 the Cuban Crisis, when Russia put nuclear warheads in Cuba, brought us very close to nuclear war. But even earlier, in the late 1940s, there were many nuclear tests in the Pacific and in Nevada that spread fallout over the nation and parts of the world. Strontium 90, a product of these tests, spread not only over the landscape, but into the food supply and into the

bones of most of the people living in 1962. Carson balances her observation by explaining that living beings have been subject to radiation from natural sources, but the problem is that current levels of radiation are much higher than people have normally experienced. Further, the effects are irreversible, unknown, and hereditary. The possible genetic mutations were not as well known in 1962, but Carson was right and made the point well enough to effect changes in attitude and political action.

Carson emphasizes the comparison of the millions of years it took to produce life as we know it with the “past quarter of a century” that people have spent in spreading lethal chemicals unknown in nature throughout the environment. [Paragraphs 4–7](#) develop the historical comparisons, but she goes on to treat the threat of the destruction of humanity first by nuclear war, then by the total contamination of the earth itself.

Her focus then shifts to the problems with insecticides. First, they are particularly effective because of the way modern industrial farming plants single crops over vast areas. The result is that the insecticides eventually become ineffective because, as Darwin predicted, resistant insects evolve to do more damage. The chemical war, as she says, is never won. Ironically, the problem we faced in 1962, and still face today, is that there is no shortage of food production, and hence there ought to be less cause to use lethal pesticides. In 1956 the Soil Bank legislation paid almost \$12 an acre for land no longer used for food production. Since 2003 farmers have been paid more than \$165 billion to grow less food.

Carson explains what some of the results of these programs have been.

Carson's subject shifts to the insect world that is under attack by pesticides. She discusses some topics that are contemporary today: infestations by invasive species. She talks about Dutch Elm disease that in 1961 began decimating elms throughout the United States and abroad. Today there remain few, if any, elms, which had been prized above other trees, particularly in village settings. Most of what she says in discussing both beneficial and dangerous insects is still being said today. For reasons that Carson may not have anticipated, western and northern pine forests are being destroyed by mountain pine beetles who profit from climate change. Although she does not discuss climate change in 1962, her work in oceanography anticipates some of the danger we face today.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Rachel Carson's "The Obligation to Endure." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What is the threat of nuclear fallout?
2. Why are insecticides potentially lethal to humans?
3. What are the problems with invasive species?

The Obligation to Endure

The history of life on earth has been a history of interaction between living things and their surroundings. To a large extent, the physical form and the habits of the earth's vegetation and its animal life have been molded by the environment. Considering the whole span of earthly time, the opposite effect, in which life actually modifies its surroundings, has been relatively slight. Only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species — man — acquired significant power to alter the nature of his world.

During the past quarter century this power has not only increased to one of disturbing magnitude but it has changed in character. The most alarming of all man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials. This pollution is for the most part irrecoverable; the chain of evil it initiates not only in the world that must support life but in living tissues is for the most part irreversible. In this now universal contamination of the environment, chemicals are the sinister and little-recognized partners of radiation in changing the very nature of the world — the very nature of its life. Strontium 90, released through nuclear explosions into the air, comes to earth in rain or drifts down as fallout, lodges in soil, enters into the grass or corn or wheat grown there, and in time takes up its abode in the bones of a human being, there to remain until his death. Similarly, chemicals sprayed on croplands or forests or gardens lie long in soil, entering into

living organisms, passing from one to another in a chain of poisoning and death. Or they pass mysteriously by underground streams until they emerge and, through the alchemy of air and sunlight, combine into new forms that kill vegetation, sicken cattle, and work unknown harm on those who drink from once pure wells. As Albert Schweitzer¹ has said, “Man can hardly even recognize the devils of his own creation.”

It took hundreds of millions of years to produce the life that now inhabits the earth — eons of time in which that developing and evolving and diversifying life reached a state of adjustment and balance with its surroundings. The environment, rigorously shaping and directing the life it supported, contained elements that were hostile as well as supporting. Certain rocks gave out dangerous radiation; even within the light of the sun, from which all life draws its energy, there were short-wave radiations with power to injure. Given time — time not in years but in millennia — life adjusts, and a balance has been reached. For time is the essential ingredient; but in the modern world there is no time.

Given time — time not in years but in millennia — life adjusts, and a balance has been reached. For time is the essential ingredient; but in the modern world there is no time.

The rapidity of change and the speed with which new situations are created follow the impetuous and heedless pace of man rather than the deliberate pace of nature. Radiation is no longer merely the background radiation of rocks, the bombardment of cosmic rays, the ultraviolet of the sun that have existed before there was any life on earth; radiation is now the unnatural creation of man's tampering with the atom. The chemicals to which life is asked to make its adjustment are no longer merely the calcium and silica and copper and all the rest of the minerals washed out of the rocks and carried in rivers to the sea; they are the synthetic creations of man's inventive mind, brewed in his laboratories, and having no counterparts in nature.

To adjust to these chemicals would require time on the scale that is nature's; it would require not merely the years of a man's life but the life of generations. And even this, were it by some miracle possible, would be futile, for the new chemicals come from our laboratories in an endless stream; almost five hundred annually find their way into actual use in the United States alone. The figure is staggering and its implications are not easily grasped — 500 new chemicals to which the bodies of men and animals are required somehow to adapt each year, chemicals totally outside the limits of biologic experience.

Among them are many that are used in man's war against nature. Since the mid-1940's over 200 basic chemicals have been created for use in killing insects, weeds, rodents, and other organisms described in the modern vernacular as "pests"; and they are sold under several thousand different brand names.

These sprays, dusts, and aerosols are now applied almost universally to farms, gardens, forests, and homes — nonselective chemicals that have the power to kill every insect, the “good” and the “bad,” to still the song of birds and the leaping of fish in the streams, to coat the leaves with a deadly film, and to linger on in soil — all this though the intended target may be only a few weeds or insects. Can anyone believe it is possible to lay down such a barrage of poisons on the surface of the earth without making it unfit for all life? They should not be called “insecticides,” but “biocides.”

The whole process of spraying seems caught up in an endless spiral. Since DDT² was released for civilian use, a process of escalation has been going on in which ever more toxic materials must be found. This has happened because insects, in a triumphant vindication of Darwin’s principle of the survival of the fittest, have evolved super races immune to the particular insecticide used, hence a deadlier one has always to be developed — and then a deadlier one than that. It has happened also because, for reasons to be described later, destructive insects often undergo a “flareback,” or resurgence, after spraying, in numbers greater than before. Thus the chemical war is never won, and all life is caught in its violent crossfire.

Along with the possibility of the extinction of mankind by nuclear war, the central problem of our age has therefore become the contamination of man’s total environment with such substances of incredible potential for harm — substances that accumulate in the tissues of plants and animals and even penetrate the germ cells to

shatter or alter the very material of heredity upon which the shape of the future depends.

Some would-be architects of our future look toward a time when it will be possible to alter the human germ plasm by design. But we may easily be doing so now by inadvertence, for many chemicals, like radiation, bring about gene mutations. It is ironic to think that man might determine his own future by something so seemingly trivial as the choice of an insect spray.

All this has been risked — for what? Future historians may well be amazed by our distorted sense of proportion. How could intelligent beings seek to control a few unwanted species by a method that contaminated the entire environment and brought the threat of disease and death even to their own kind?

Yet this is precisely what we have done. We have done it, moreover, for reasons that collapse the moment we examine them. We are told that the enormous and expanding use of pesticides is necessary to maintain farm production. Yet is our real problem not one of *overproduction*? Our farms, despite measures to remove acreages from production and to pay farmers *not* to produce, have yielded such a staggering excess of crops that the American taxpayer in 1962 is paying out more than one billion dollars a year as the total carrying cost of the surplus-food storage program. And is the situation helped when one branch of the Agriculture Department tries to reduce production while another states, as it did in 1958, “It is believed generally that reduction of crop acreages under provisions of the Soil Bank will stimulate

interest in use of chemicals to obtain maximum production on the land retained in crops.”

All this is not to say there is no insect problem and no need of control. I am saying, rather, that control must be geared to realities, not to mythical situations, and that the methods employed must be such that they do not destroy us along with the insects.

The problem whose attempted solution has brought such a train of disaster in its wake is an accompaniment of our modern way of life. Long before the age of man, insects inhabited the earth — a group of extraordinarily varied and adaptable beings. Over the course of time since man’s advent, a small percentage of the more than half a million species of insects have come into conflict with human welfare in two principal ways: as competitors for the food supply and as carriers of human disease.

Disease-carrying insects become important where human beings are crowded together, especially under conditions where sanitation is poor, as in time of natural disaster or war or in situations of extreme poverty and deprivation. Then control of some sort becomes necessary. It is a sobering fact, however, as we shall presently see, that the method of massive chemical control has had only limited success, and also threatens to worsen the very conditions it is intended to curb.

Under primitive agricultural conditions the farmer had few insect problems. These arose with the intensification of agriculture — the

devotion of immense acreages to a single crop. Such a system set the stage for explosive increases in specific insect populations. Single-crop farming does not take advantage of the principles by which nature works; it is agriculture as an engineer might conceive it to be. Nature has introduced great variety into the landscape, but man has displayed a passion for simplifying it. Thus he undoes the built-in checks and balances by which nature holds the species within bounds. One important natural check is a limit on the amount of suitable habitat for each species. Obviously then, an insect that lives on wheat can build up its population to much higher levels on a farm devoted to wheat than on one in which wheat is intermingled with other crops to which the insect is not adapted.

The same thing happens in other situations. A generation or more ago, the towns of large areas of the United States lined their streets with the noble elm tree. Now the beauty they hopefully created is threatened with complete destruction as disease sweeps through the elms, carried by a beetle that would have only limited chance to build up large populations and to spread from tree to tree if the elms were only occasional trees in a richly diversified planting.

Another factor in the modern insect problem is one that must be viewed against a background of geologic and human history: the spreading of thousands of different kinds of organisms from their native homes to invade new territories. This worldwide migration has been studied and graphically described by the British ecologist Charles Elton³ in his recent book *The Ecology of*

Invasions. During the Cretaceous Period, some hundred million years ago, flooding seas cut many land bridges between continents and living things found themselves confined in what Elton calls “colossal separate nature reserves.” There, isolated from others of their kind, they developed many new species. When some of the land masses were joined again, about 15 million years ago, these species began to move out into new territories — a movement that is not only still in progress but is now receiving considerable assistance from man.

The importation of plants is the primary agent in the modern spread of species, for animals have almost invariably gone along with the plants, quarantine being a comparatively recent and not completely effective innovation. The United States Office of Plant Introduction alone has introduced almost 200,000 species and varieties of plants from all over the world. Nearly half of the 180 or so major insect enemies of plants in the United States are accidental imports from abroad, and most of them have come as hitchhikers on plants.

In new territory, out of reach of the restraining hand of the natural enemies that kept down its numbers in its native land, an invading plant or animal is able to become enormously abundant. Thus it is no accident that our most troublesome insects are introduced species.

These invasions, both the naturally occurring and those dependent on human assistance, are likely to continue indefinitely. Quarantine and massive chemical campaigns are only extremely

expensive ways of buying time. We are faced, according to Dr. Elton, “with a life-and-death need not just to find new technological means of suppressing this plant or that animal”; instead we need the basic knowledge of animal populations and their relations to their surroundings that will “promote an even balance and damp down the explosive power of outbreaks and new invasions.”

Much of the necessary knowledge is now available but we do not use it. We train ecologists in our universities and even employ them in our governmental agencies but we seldom take their advice. We allow the chemical death rain to fall as though there were no alternative, whereas in fact there are many, and our ingenuity could soon discover many more if given opportunity.

Have we fallen into a mesmerized state that makes us accept as inevitable that which is inferior or detrimental, as though having lost the will or the vision to demand that which is good? Such thinking, in the words of the ecologist Paul Shepard,⁴ “idealizes life with only its head out of water, inches above the limits of toleration of the corruption of its own environment ... Why should we tolerate a diet of weak poisons, a home in insipid surroundings, a circle of acquaintances who are not quite our enemies, the noise of motors with just enough relief to prevent insanity? Who would want to live in a world which is just not quite fatal?”

Yet such a world is pressed upon us. The crusade to create a chemically sterile, insect-free world seems to have engendered a

fanatic zeal on the part of many specialists and most of the so-called control agencies. On every hand there is evidence that those engaged in spraying operations exercise a ruthless power. "The regulatory entomologists ... function as prosecutor, judge and jury, tax assessor and collector and sheriff to enforce their own orders," said Connecticut entomologist Neely Turner.⁵ The most flagrant abuses go unchecked in both state and federal agencies.

It is not my contention that chemical insecticides must never be used. I do contend that we have put poisonous and biologically potent chemicals indiscriminately into the hands of persons largely or wholly ignorant of their potentials for harm. We have subjected enormous numbers of people to contact with these poisons, without their consent and often without their knowledge. If the Bill of Rights contains no guarantee that a citizen shall be secure against lethal poisons distributed either by private individuals or by public officials, it is surely only because our forefathers, despite their considerable wisdom and foresight, could conceive of no such problem.

I contend, furthermore, that we have allowed these chemicals to be used with little or no advance investigation of their effect on soil, water, wildlife, and man himself. Future generations are unlikely to condone our lack of prudent concern for the integrity of the natural world that supports all life.

There is still very limited awareness of the nature of the threat. This is an era of specialists, each of whom sees his own problem

and is unaware of or intolerant of the larger frame into which it fits. It is also an era dominated by industry, in which the right to make a dollar at whatever cost is seldom challenged. When the public protests, confronted with some obvious evidence of damaging results of pesticide applications, it is fed little tranquilizing pills of half truth. We urgently need an end to these false assurances, to the sugar coating of unpalatable facts. It is the public that is being asked to assume the risks that the insect controllers calculate. The public must decide whether it wishes to continue on the present road, and it can do so only when in full possession of the facts. In the words of Jean Rostand, "The obligation to endure gives us the right to know."

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What kind of pollution does Carson fear?
2. Why does Carson focus on immense periods of time?
3. What does Carson mean by a war on nature?
4. What kinds of chemicals are used as insecticides?
5. What is the chief threat to mankind?
6. How effective have pesticides been?
7. What is the result of single-crop farming?

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Research farm support programs and farmer subsidies. Write an essay that takes sides on whether or not such government programs should be continued, discontinued, or expanded. Some critics have

described the programs as welfare for farmers. Other critics have complained that the programs make food prices artificially high. After your research, how do you respond to such critics?

2. Which disease-carrying insects must be controlled? How would you suggest they be controlled? Is there a way of controlling them without using dangerous pesticides? After you have done some basic research, choose the one disease-carrying insect that you feel is most detrimental. Is the insect dangerous to humans? Is it dangerous to animals? Why do you feel it is most dangerous?
3. Large agribusinesses such as Archer Daniels Midland and Monsanto advertise that they aim at a sustainable program for producing food. Examine their websites to determine what their claims are, then consult newspaper and magazine coverage on both companies to see how these companies are perceived. Do you think that their approach to food production would satisfy Carson's demands for a safer environment? What specific steps have these companies taken to improve the environment and human health?
4. What are the positions scientists have taken on climate change? What are the risks of climate change today? What position have politicians in the United States taken on climate change? What are the suggestions made to alleviate climate change? Have U.S. politicians put any of the suggestions in place? Why is their resistance to changes that would lessen climate change so strong? What are your views on climate change?
5. Carson was worried about nuclear war and nuclear fallout. How concerned is your generation about the threat of nuclear war? What is the major nuclear threat today? How serious is the threat of nuclear plant melt-downs, such as those of Chernobyl in Russia and Fukushima in Japan? What has been the outcome of Three Mile Island's melt-down in Pennsylvania in 1979? What fears do you or your peers have for a new catastrophe involving nuclear material?



CONNECTIONS

1. Rachel Carson refers directly to Charles Darwin when she talks about insects evolving to counter the effects of insecticides. Today we also talk about the ways in which bacteria fight back against antibiotics. What details in Darwin's essay, "[Natural Selection](#)", help strengthen Carson's views about the ways in which insects may make pesticides ineffective?
2. Establish what you think are the ethical issues in the overuse of pesticides as Carson describes them. Consult Philippa Foot ("[Vices and Virtues](#)") on the question of virtues and vices and apply what she says to the circumstances that Carson discusses. To what extent might what W. E. B. Du Bois ("[The Soul of White Folks](#)") says about - colonial behavior shed light on the ethical issues involved in damaging the environment with lethal chemicals? What might either of these writers have said about the sacrifice of the environment for monetary gain? Is it possible there is no ethical issue at play in Carson's essay?



Michio Kaku *The Theory of the Universe?*



Ted Thai/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images

MICHIO KAKU (b. 1947) was born and raised in San Jose, California, received his undergraduate degree from Harvard, and returned to California for his Ph.D. in physics from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1972. Since 1973, he has been professor of theoretical physics at the City College and the

Graduate Center of the City University of New York, publishing widely on superstring theory, supergravity, and string field theory. He hosts a weekly national radio show on science called *Science Fantastic* that is carried by ninety radio stations in the United States. Kaku is deeply concerned about the practical ramifications of theoretical physics and has written several books on the dangers of nuclear war. He is active in groups that advocate disarmament.

“The Theory of the Universe?” is in a collection called *Mysteries of Life and the Universe* (1992). In this work, Kaku attempts to explain the complexities of modern physics, with a special look at efforts to resolve the conflicts between two important theories: quantum theory and the theory of relativity. Quantum theory explains the physics of atoms and small particles. The theory of relativity explains cosmic phenomena such as gravity and the universe. However, neither theory works in the other’s sphere of influence. Hence, a new theory is needed to resolve the problems; this new theory, called superstring theory, postulates that instead of hard particles existing at the center of atoms, “tiny strings of energy” vibrate at an infinite number of frequencies. These strings of energy are at the heart of atoms and constitute everything we know as matter in the universe.

Because physics involves specialized, advanced mathematics, much of what Kaku says is simplified for a general audience. As a result, we can understand the theories, but only in general terms. Therefore, without the mathematics, we must accept certain ideas at face value, making an effort to imagine, along with Kaku, how

modern theories of physics work. Fortunately, he is able to spell out the very complex theories in a fashion that makes them as intelligible as possible for readers who are not experts in mathematics.

Some of the ideas in this essay are also developed in Kaku's best-selling book *Hyperspace* (1994), which discusses the so-called crazy theories of contemporary physicists. Kaku tells us that modern research by contemporary physicists has produced a view of the natural world that virtually defies common sense, just as facts such as the earth's roundness (rather than flatness) and its movement around the sun (rather than the reverse) initially contradicted the common sense of our predecessors.

Unfortunately, common sense does not help us understand modern physics or the world of the atom. Because we cannot directly perceive the atom or the molecule, we require sophisticated equipment to make their nature evident.

Interestingly, Francis Bacon insisted in *Novum Organum* that until better tools were developed, people would not be able to perceive the truth about the complexities of nature.

In an early chapter of *Hyperspace*, Kaku tells a story about being a young boy and watching fish in a small pond. He realized that for the carp, it was inconceivable that anything existed outside the water in which they swam. Their perceptions were limited entirely to the watery environment of their home. The same is true for people. Our environment may seem larger and more capacious than a pond, but we, like the carp, are limited in our perceptions. Plato realized this when he postulated his allegory of the cave and

theorized that human beings' profoundly limited sensory apparatus prevents us from imagining experiences beyond what we know from our senses.

Kaku explains that the problems involved in uniting the quantum theory with the theory of relativity may be solved by postulating a ten-dimensional universe. Because we live in a four-dimensional universe (three dimensions of space and one of time), we are like the carp in their pond and cannot imagine a world of ten dimensions. But Kaku explains that mathematical formulas can deal with extra dimensions easily. However, he ends his essay by saying that we need a new kind of mathematics to fully describe the way in which the two great theories of physics join together.

KAKU'S RHETORIC

Kaku's books are meant for a general reading public and use short paragraphs and intriguing subheads, such as:

- The Four Fundamental Forces
- Two Great Theories
- Superstrings
- Ten-Dimensional Hyperspace
- What Happened before the Big Bang?

Kaku enumerates the four forces in the universe and gives us examples of what they are and how they affect the modern world. He also implies their possible destructive powers. These rhetorical techniques help readers grasp some of the ideas that the

research of Michio Kaku and other modern physicists has developed.

Because the essay offers a general overview of an interesting and elusive subject, Kaku provides a number of analogies and examples designed to give us a chance to understand the complexities of the theories and their implications. His example of a shotput on a bed with a marble rolling toward it is commonly used to explain Einstein's theory of how spacetime can be warped in such a way as to create a gravitational field. His example of the violin string's capacity to have an infinite number of vibrations helps explain part of string theory. Even his example of meeting "some friends for lunch in Manhattan" ([para. 41](#)) shows how the three dimensions of space express themselves in our experience. Finally, he ends the essay with an extensive "Parable of the Gemstone," in which he imagines a world in which people live in Flatland in two dimensions and cannot solve the problem of reconstructing an exploded gemstone.

The most important aspect of this essay's rhetoric involves the explanation of complex theories in terms that readers can grasp easily. Although we will not leave this essay with a full understanding of the complexities of a unified theory, we will at least become acquainted with the problems that physicists face in trying to both describe and understand how the universe works.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Michio Kaku's "The Theory of the Universe?" Keeping

them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What are the four fundamental forces?
2. What do quantum theory and general relativity explain?
3. Why are higher dimensions needed to unify the two theories?

From Mysteries of Life and the Universe..

The Theory of the Universe?

When I was a child of eight, I heard a story that will stay with me for the rest of my life. I remember my schoolteachers telling us about a great scientist who had just died. They talked about him with great reverence, calling him one of the greatest scientists in all history. They said that very few people could understand his ideas, but that his discoveries had changed the entire world and everything around us.

But what most intrigued me about this man was that he had died before he could complete his greatest discovery. They said he had spent years on this theory, but he died with unfinished papers still sitting on his desk.

I was fascinated by the story. To a child, this was a great mystery. What was his unfinished work? What problem could possibly be so difficult and so important that such a great scientist would dedicate years of his life to its pursuit?

Curious, I decided to learn all I could about Albert Einstein¹ and his unfinished theory. Some of the happiest moments of my childhood were spent quietly reading every book I could find about this great man and his ideas. When I exhausted the books in our local library, I began to scour libraries and bookstores across the city and state, eagerly searching for more clues. I soon learned that this story was far more exciting than any murder mystery and more important than anything I could ever imagine. I decided that I

would try to get to the root of this mystery, even if I had to become a theoretical physicist to do it.

Gradually, I began to appreciate the magnitude of his unfinished quest. I learned that Einstein had three great theories. The first two, the special and the general theories of relativity, led to the development of the atomic bomb and to our present-day conceptions of black holes and the Big Bang. These two theories by themselves earned him his reputation as the greatest scientist since Isaac Newton.²

However, Einstein was not satisfied. The third, which he called the *unified field theory*, was to have been his crowning achievement. It was to be the theory of the universe, the Holy Grail³ of physics that would finally unify all physical laws into one simple framework. It was to have been the ultimate goal of all physics, the theory to end all theories.

Sadly, it consumed Einstein for the last thirty years of his life; he spent many lonely years in a frustrating pursuit of the greatest theory of all time. But he wasn't alone; I learned that some of the greatest minds of the twentieth century, such as Werner Heisenberg and Wolfgang Pauli,⁴ also struggled with this problem and ultimately gave up.

Given the fruitless search that has stumped these and other Nobel Prize winners for half

a century, most physicists agree that the Theory of Everything must be a radical departure from everything that has been tried before.

Given the fruitless search that has stumped these and other Nobel Prize winners for half a century, most physicists agree that the Theory of Everything must be a radical departure from everything that has been tried before. For example, when Niels Bohr,⁵ founder of modern atomic theory, once listened to Pauli's explanation of his own version of the unified field theory, Bohr finally stood up and said, "We are all agreed that your theory is absolutely crazy. But what divides us is whether your theory is crazy enough."

Today, however, after decades of false starts and frustrating dead ends, many of the world's leading physicists think that they have finally found the theory "crazy enough" to be the unified field theory. Scores of physicists in the world's major research laboratories now believe we have at last found the Theory of Everything.

The theory that has generated so much excitement is called the *superstring theory*. Nearly every science publication in the world has featured major stories on the superstring theory, interviewing some of its pioneers, such as John Schwarz, Michael Green, and Yoichiro Nambu.⁶ (*Discover* magazine even featured it twice on its

cover.) My book *Beyond Einstein: The Cosmic Search for the Theory of the Universe* was the first attempt to explain this fabulous theory to the lay audience.

Naturally, any theory that claims to have solved the most intimate secrets of the universe will be the center of intense controversy. Even Nobel Prize winners have engaged in heated discussions about the validity of the superstring theory. In fact, over this theory we are witnessing the liveliest debate in theoretical physics in decades.

To understand the power of the superstring theory and why it is heralded as the theory of the universe (and to understand the delicious controversy that it has stirred up), it is necessary to understand that there are four forces that control everything in the known universe, and that the superstring theory gives us the first (and only) description that can unite all four forces in a single framework.

The Four Fundamental Forces

Over two thousand years ago, the ancient Greeks thought that all matter in the universe could be reduced to four elements: air, water, earth, and fire. Today, after centuries of research, we know that these substances are actually composites; they in turn are made of smaller atoms and subatomic particles held together by just four and only four fundamental forces.

Gravity is the force that keeps our feet anchored to the spinning earth and binds the solar system and the galaxies together. If the force of gravity could somehow be turned off, we would be immediately flung into outer space at approximately a thousand miles per hour. Furthermore, if gravity did not hold the Sun together, it would explode in a catastrophic burst of energy. Without gravity, the Earth and the planets would spin out into freezing deep space and the galaxies would fly apart.

Electromagnetism is the force that lights up our cities and energizes our household appliances. The electronic revolution, which has given us the light bulb, TV, the telephone, the computer, radio, radar, the microwave, and the dishwasher, is a byproduct of the electromagnetic force. Without this force, our civilization would be wrenched several hundred years into the past, into a primitive world lit by candlelight and camp fires.

The strong nuclear force is the force that powers the Sun. Without the nuclear force, the stars would flicker out and the heavens would go dark. Without the Sun, all life on Earth would perish as the oceans turned to solid ice. The nuclear force not only makes life on Earth possible, it is also the devastating force unleashed by a hydrogen bomb, which can be compared to a piece of the Sun brought down to Earth.

The weak nuclear force is the force responsible for radioactive decay. The weak force is harnessed in modern hospitals in the form of radioactive tracers used in nuclear medicine. For example, dramatic color pictures of the living brain as it thinks and

experiences emotions are made possible by the decay of radioactive sugar in the brain.

It is no exaggeration to say that the mastery of each of these four fundamental forces has changed every aspect of human civilization. For example, when Newton tried to solve his theory of gravitation, he was forced to develop a new mathematics and formulate his celebrated laws of motion. These laws of mechanics in turn helped to usher in the Industrial Revolution.

Furthermore, the mastery of the electromagnetic force by mathematical physicist James Maxwell⁷ in the 1860s has revolutionized our way of life. Whenever there is a power blackout, we are forced to live much like our forebears in the last century. Today, over half of the world's industrial wealth is connected, in some way or other, to the electromagnetic force, without which modern civilization is unthinkable.

Similarly, when the nuclear force was unleashed with the atomic bomb, human history for the first time faced a new and frightening set of possibilities, including the total annihilation of all life on Earth. With the nuclear force, we could finally understand the enormous engine that lies within the Sun and the stars, but we could also glimpse for the first time the end of humanity itself.

Thus, whenever scientists unravel the secrets of one of the four fundamental forces, they irrevocably alter the course of modern civilization. Some of the greatest breakthroughs in the history of

the sciences can be traced back to the gradual understanding of these forces.

Given their importance the next question is, Can these four fundamental forces be united into one super force? Are they but diverse manifestations of a deeper reality?

Two Great Theories

At present there are two physical frameworks that have partially explained the mysterious features of these four fundamental forces. Remarkably, these two formalisms, the *quantum theory* and *general relativity*, allow us to explain the *sum total of all physical knowledge* at the fundamental level. Without exception.

All the laws of physics and chemistry, which can fill entire libraries with technical journals and books, can in principle be derived from these two fundamental theories — making these the most successful physical theories of all time, withstanding the test of thousands of experiments and challenges.

Ironically, these two fundamental frameworks are diametrically opposed to each other. The quantum theory, for example, is the theory of the microcosm, with unparalleled success at describing the subatomic world. The theory of relativity, by contrast, is a theory of the macrocosmic world, the world of galaxies, superclusters, black holes, and Creation itself.

The quantum theory explains three of the four forces (the weak and strong nuclear forces, and the electromagnetic force) by postulating the exchange of tiny packets of energy, called *quanta*. When a flashlight is turned on, for example, it emits trillions upon trillions of photons, or quanta, of light. Lasers, radar waves, and microwaves all can be described by postulating that they are caused by the movement of these tiny quanta of energy. Likewise, the weak force is governed by the exchange of subatomic particles called *W-bosons*. The strong nuclear force, in turn, binds protons together by the exchange of *gluons*.

However, the quantum theory stands in sharp contrast to Einstein's general theory of relativity, which postulates an entirely different physical picture to explain the force of gravity.

Imagine, for the moment, dropping a heavy shotput on a large bedspread. The shotput will, of course, sink deeply into the bedspread. Now imagine shooting a small marble across the bed. Since the bed is warped, the marble will execute a curved path. However, for a person viewing the marble from a great distance, it will appear that the shotput is exerting an invisible "force" on the marble, forcing it to move in a curved path. In other words, we can now replace the clumsy concept of a "force" with the more elegant concept of a bending of space itself. We now have an entirely new definition of this "force." It is nothing but the byproduct of the warping of space.

In the same way that a marble moves on a curved bedspread, the Earth moves around the Sun in a curved path, because space-

time itself is curved. In this new picture, gravity is not a “force” but a byproduct of the warping of space-time. In some sense, gravity does not exist; what moves the planets and stars is the distortion of space and time.

However, the problem that has stubbornly resisted solution for fifty years is that these two frameworks do not resemble each other in any way. The quantum theory reduces “forces” to the exchange of discrete packets of energy, or quanta, while Einstein’s theory of gravity, by contrast, explains the cosmic forces holding the galaxies together by postulating the smooth deformation of the fabric of space-time. This is the root of the problem, that the quantum theory and general relativity have two different physical pictures (packets of energy versus smooth spacetime continua) and different mathematics to describe them. This sad state of affairs can be compared to Mother Nature having two hands, neither of which communicates with the other.

All attempts by the greatest minds of the twentieth century at merging the quantum theory with the theory of gravity have failed. Unquestionably, the greatest problem facing physicists today is the unification of these two physical frameworks into one theory.

Superstrings

Today, however, many physicists think that we have finally solved this long-standing problem. A new theory, which is certainly “crazy enough” to be correct, has astounded the world’s physics

community. But it has also raised a storm of controversy, with Nobel Prize winners adamantly taking opposite sides of the issue.

This is the superstring theory, which postulates that all matter and energy can be reduced to tiny strings of energy vibrating in a ten-dimensional universe.

Edward Witten,⁸ of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, who some claim is the successor to Einstein, has said that superstring theory will dominate the world of physics for the next fifty years, in the same way that the quantum theory has dominated physics for the last half century.

As Einstein once said, all great physical theories can be represented by simple pictures. Similarly, superstring theory can be explained visually. Imagine a violin string, for example. The note A is no more fundamental than the note B. What is fundamental is the violin string itself. By studying vibrations or harmonies on a violin string, one can calculate the infinite number of possible frequencies that can exist.

Similarly, the superstring can also vibrate in different frequencies. Each frequency, in turn, corresponds to a subatomic particle, or a quantum. This explains why there appears to be an infinite number of particles. According to this theory, our bodies, which are made of subatomic particles, can be described by the resonances of trillions upon trillions of tiny strings.

In summary, the “notes” of the superstring are the subatomic particles, the “harmonies” of the superstring are the laws of physics, and the universe can be compared to a “symphony” of vibrating superstrings.

As the string vibrates, however, it causes the surrounding space-time continuum to warp around it. Miraculously enough, a detailed calculation shows that the superstring forces the space-time continuum to be distorted exactly as Einstein originally predicted. Thus, we now have a harmonious description that merges the theory of quanta with the theory of space-time continua.

Ten-Dimensional Hyperspace

The superstring theory represents perhaps the most radical departure from ordinary physics in decades.

The superstring theory represents perhaps the most radical departure from ordinary physics in decades. But its most controversial prediction is that the universe originally began in ten dimensions. To its supporters, the prediction of a ten-dimensional universe has been a conceptual tour de force introducing a startling, breathtaking mathematics into the world of physics. To its critics, however, the introduction of ten-dimensional hyperspace borders on science fiction.

To understand these higher dimensions, we must remember that it takes three numbers to locate every point in the universe, from the tip of your nose to the ends of the universe.

For example, if you want to meet some friends for lunch in Manhattan, you say that you will meet them at the building at the corner of Forty-second and Fifth Avenue, on the thirty-seventh floor. It takes two numbers to locate your position on a map, and one number to specify the distance above the map.

However, the existence of the fourth spatial dimension has been a lively area of debate since the time of the Greeks. Ptolemy,⁹ in fact, even gave a “proof” that more than three dimensions cannot exist. Ptolemy reasoned that only three straight lines that are mutually perpendicular can be drawn (for example, the three perpendicular lines making up a corner of a room). Since a fourth straight line cannot be drawn perpendicular to each of the other three axes — ergo! — the fourth dimension cannot exist.

What Ptolemy actually proved was that it is impossible for us to *visualize* the fourth dimension. Although computers routinely manipulate equations in n -dimensional space, humans are incapable of visualizing more than three dimensions.

The reason for this unfortunate accident has to do with biology rather than physics. Human evolution put a premium on being able to visualize objects moving in three dimensions, such as lunging saber-tooth tigers and charging mammoths.

Since tigers do not attack us in the fourth dimension, there was no evolutionary correction pressure to develop a brain with the ability to visualize four dimensions.

From a mathematical point of view, however, adding higher dimensions has a distinct advantage: It allows us to describe more forces. There is more “room” in higher dimensions to insert the electromagnetic force into the gravitational force. (In this picture, light becomes a vibration in the fourth dimension.) In other words, adding more dimensions to a theory always allows us to unify more laws of physics.

A simple analogy may help. The ancients were once puzzled by the weather. Why does it get colder as we go north? Why do the winds blow to the west? What is the origin of the seasons? To the ancients, these were mysteries that could not be solved.

The key to these puzzles, of course, is to leap into the third dimension, to go *up* into outer space, to see that the Earth is actually a sphere rotating around a tilted axis. In one stroke, these mysteries of the weather — the seasons, the winds, the temperature patterns, etc. — become transparent.

Likewise, the superstring is able to accommodate a large number of forces because it has more “room” in its equations to do so.

What Happened Before the Big Bang?

One of the nagging problems of Einstein's old theory of gravity was that it did not explain the origin of the Big Bang.

The ten-dimensional superstring theory, however, gives us a compelling explanation according to which the universe originally started as a perfect ten-dimensional universe with nothing in it.

However, this ten-dimensional universe was not stable. The original ten-dimensional space-time finally "cracked" into two pieces, four- and six-dimensional universes. The six-dimensional universe collapsed into a tiny ball, while the remaining four-dimensional universe inflated at an enormous rate.

The four-dimensional universe (ours) expanded rapidly, eventually creating the Big Bang, while the six-dimensional universe wrapped itself into a ball and collapsed down to infinitesimal size.

The Big Bang is now viewed as a rather minor aftershock of a more cataclysmic collapse: the breaking of a ten-dimensional universe into four- and six-dimensional universes.

In principle, it also explains why we cannot measure the six-dimensional universe: it has shrunk down to a size smaller than an atom.

Re-creating Creation

Although the superstring theory has been called the most sensational discovery in theoretical physics in the past decades, its critics have focused on its weakest point, that it is almost

impossible to test. The energy at which the four fundamental forces merge into a single unified force is the fabulous *Planck energy*,¹⁰ which is a billion billion times greater than the energy found in a proton.

Even if all the nations of the Earth were to band together and single-mindedly build the biggest atom smasher in all history, it would still not be enough to test this theory.

Because of this, some physicists have scoffed at the idea that superstring theory can be considered a legitimate theory. Nobel laureate Sheldon Glashow,¹¹ for example, has compared the superstring theory to the former President Reagan's Star Wars program because it is untestable and drains the best scientific talent.

The reason the theory cannot be tested is rather simple. The Theory of Everything is necessarily a theory of Creation. It must explain everything, from the origin of the Big Bang down to that of the lilies of the field. To test this theory on Earth, therefore, means to re-create Creation on Earth, which is impossible with present-day technology.

The SSC: Biggest Experiment of All Time

These questions about unifying the fundamental forces may not be academic if the largest scientific machine ever, the SSC,¹² is built to test some of our ideas about the instant of Creation.

(Although the SSC was originally approved by the Reagan

administration, because of its enormous cost, the project is still touch-and-go, depending every year on Congressional funding.)

The SSC is projected to accelerate protons to a staggering energy of tens of trillions of electron volts. When these subatomic particles slam into each other at these fantastic energies, they will generate temperatures that have not been reached since the instant of Creation (although not hot enough to test fully the superstring theory). That is why the supercollider is sometimes called a “window on Creation.”

The SSC is projected to cost over eight billion dollars (a large amount of money compared to the government’s science budget, but insignificant relative to that of the Pentagon). By every measure, it will be a colossal machine. It will consist of a ring of powerful magnets stretched out in a tube over fifty miles in diameter. In fact, one could easily fit the Washington Beltway, which surrounds Washington, D.C., inside the SSC.

At present, the SSC is scheduled to be finished near the turn of the century in Texas, near the city of Dallas. When completed, it will employ thousands of physicists and engineers and cost millions of dollars to operate.

At the very least, physicists hope that the SSC will find some exotic subatomic particles, such as the Higgs boson and the top quark, in order to complete our present-day understanding of the quantum theory. However, there is also the small chance that physicists might discover “supersymmetric” particles, which are

predicted by the superstring theory. In other words, although the superstring theory cannot be tested directly by the SSC, one hopes to find particles (vibrations) predicted by superstring theory among the debris created by smashing protons together.

The Parable of the Gemstone

To understand the intense controversy surrounding superstring theory, think of the following parable.

Imagine that at the beginning of time there was a beautiful, glittering gemstone. Its perfect symmetries were a sight to behold. However, it possessed a tiny flaw and became unstable, eventually exploding into thousands of pieces. Imagine that the fragments of the gemstone rained down on a flat, two-dimensional world called Flatland, where there lived a mythical race of beings called Flatlanders.

These Flatlanders were intrigued by the beauty of the fragments, which could be found scattered all over Flatland. The scientists of Flatland postulated that these fragments must have come from a crystal of unimaginable beauty that shattered in a titanic Big Bang. They then decided to embark upon a noble quest to reassemble all the pieces of the gemstone.

After two thousand years of labor by the finest minds of Flatland, they were finally able to fit many, but certainly not all, of the fragments together in two chunks. The first chunk was called the *quantum*, and the second chunk was called *relativity*.

Although the Flatlanders were rightfully proud of their progress, they were dismayed to find that these two chunks did not fit together. For half a century, the Flatlanders maneuvered the chunks in all possible ways and still could not make them fit.

Finally, some of the younger, more rebellious scientists suggested a heretical solution: perhaps these two chunks could fit together if they were moved in a *third dimension*.

This immediately set off the greatest scientific controversy in years. The older scientists scoffed at this idea, because they didn't believe in an unseen third dimension. "What you can't measure doesn't exist," they declared.

Furthermore, even if the third dimension existed, one could calculate that the energy necessary to move the pieces *up* off Flatland would exceed all the energy available in Flatland. Thus it was an untestable theory.

However, the younger scientists were undaunted. Using pure mathematics, they could show that these two chunks would likely fit together if they were rotated and moved in the third dimension. The younger scientists claimed that the problem was therefore theoretical rather than experimental. If one could completely solve the equations of the third dimension, one could, in principle, fit the two chunks perfectly together and resolve the problem once and for all.

We Are Not Smart Enough

That is also the conclusion of today's superstring enthusiasts: the fundamental problem is theoretical, not practical. The true problem is in solving the theory completely and then comparing it with present-day experimental data, not in building gigantic atom smashers.

Edward Witten, impressed by the vast new areas of mathematics opened up by the superstring theory, has said that the superstring theory represents "twenty-first-century physics that fell accidentally into the twentieth century."

The superstring theory may very well be twenty-first-century physics, but twenty-first-century mathematics has not yet been discovered.

This situation is not entirely new to the history of physics. When Newton first discovered the universal law of gravitation at the age of twenty-three, he was unable to solve his equation because the mathematics of the seventeenth century was too primitive. He then labored over the next twenty years to develop a new mathematical formalism (calculus) that was powerful enough to solve his universal law of gravitation.

Similarly, the fundamental problem facing the superstring theory is theoretical. If we could only sharpen our analytical skills and develop more powerful mathematical tools, perhaps we could solve the superstring theory and end the controversy.

Ironically, the superstring equations stand before us in perfectly well defined form, yet we are too primitive to understand why they work so well, and we are too dim-witted to solve them. The search for the theory of the universe is perhaps finally entering its last phase, awaiting the birth of a new mathematics powerful enough to solve it.

Imagine a child gazing at a TV set. The images and stories conveyed through the screen are easily understood by the child, yet the electronic wizardry inside the TV set is beyond the child's ken. Likewise, we physicists gaze in wonder at the mathematical sophistication and elegance of the superstring equation and are awed by its power, yet we do not understand why it works.

Perhaps some readers will be inspired by this story to read every book in their libraries about the superstring theory. Perhaps some young reader will be the one to complete this quest for the theory of the universe, begun so many years ago by Einstein.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. Which theory describes the subatomic world?
2. Which theory explains the cosmos?
3. Why is it so difficult to develop a unified theory?
4. Why does a modern unified theory of physics have to sound crazy?
5. What is the weak nuclear force?
6. How does the electromagnetic force affect our culture?
7. What is the string theory? Why is it interesting to scientists?

 SUGGESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Michio Kaku discusses the “state of the art” of modern science, but in 1992, he imagined that the SSC, or Superconducting Super Collider, would be finished in Texas. However, funds were withdrawn and the collider was built in Geneva. Research the history of the Texas collider and how CERN was built in Geneva. Write an essay explaining the importance of the Geneva collider and what success it has had.
2. Write an essay that explains quantum theory to a person who has no scientific background. Explain what it tells us about physics and why it is important. Kaku is very simple in his explanation, but include in your essay something of the background and the early explanations for physical events that eventually led to the quantum theory.
3. Albert Einstein is referenced in the essay as trying to establish a unified theory that would combine the conflicting theories of quantum mechanics and general relativity. In a brief essay, introduce Albert Einstein and his theories to an audience of people interested in science or to an audience of people who are interested in the arts. If possible, use the kind of examples that Kaku uses to explain difficult ideas.
4. Kaku mentions Isaac Newton as a scientist of great importance, second only to Einstein. Write an essay explaining why Newton is so important. What were his achievements in physics and mathematics? How did he develop his theory of gravity? What are his theories of mechanics, and why are they important? Is Newton as important at Kaku says he is?
5. In a brief essay, examine Kaku’s explanations of the problems of modern physics. What confuses you? What problems do you note that are not fully explained? What do you need to know in order to better understand the theories that Kaku is trying to explain? He admits that theories of physics today have to be really crazy if they are to be taken seriously. What does he mean by this? How much

more do you know about physics now that you have read Kaku compared with before you read this essay? How important to you is a knowledge of physics?

6. The superstring theory has been very attractive to physicists for more than twenty years. Do some research and write an essay that brings us up to date on what is now known about the string theory. Is it still the most attractive theory designed to produce a unified theory? How difficult is it to understand? Does your research convince you that it is a workable theory and that it may lead to the unified theory that Kaku wants?

CONNECTIONS

1. Write an essay that connects Plato's "[Allegory of the Cave](#)" and Francis Bacon's "[The Four Idols](#)" with the issues that Michio Kaku is dealing with in his essay. In what ways does referencing Plato and Bacon help you understand the complexities of Kaku's essay? What do Plato and Bacon say about how we know what we know, and how we are sometimes prevented from knowing the truth about the world around us.
2. How does Plato's "[The Allegory of the Cave](#)" prepare us for reading the work of Kaku? What does Plato say about the human mind that has special relevance for comprehending Kaku's "The Theory of the Universe"? In what ways would the use of mathematics in explaining reality help us understand how Plato's cave represents our limits of perception? Is Kaku emulating Plato by introducing the metaphor of Flatland? How useful are metaphors in helping us understand the complexities of modern physics? Write an essay that shows how Plato's and Kaku's thinking are connected.



Ruth Moore *Evolution Revised: A New Time and a New Way*



Washington University Libraries, Department of Special Collections

RUTH MOORE (1909–1989) was famous in the 1950s for her work on evolution. Primarily a journalist, she received her undergraduate and master's degrees from the University of Washington. She was a native of St. Louis, and her first job was with the *St. Louis Star-Times*. In 1943 she began writing for *The*

Chicago Sun, which became the *Chicago Sun-Times* and said she covered almost everything, “from garbage to the American Medical Association.” She was appointed to the Washington Bureau late in 1943 and did not return to Chicago until 1950, where she stayed with the *Chicago Sun-Times* for the next twenty years.

However, during this time she began the writing that would make her well known in scientific circles. Her first book, *Man, Time and Fossils: The Story of Evolution*, was published in 1953, after she had taken a leave of absence from her newspaper to conduct her research and writing. It was published by the prestigious Alfred A. Knopf Company and surprised Moore by becoming a best-seller. She said that the only way she could have addressed the subject of evolution was as a reporter. “The function of a reporter is to tell about, and in one sense to interpret, the work of the expert for the layman” (p. vii). Moore’s books were generally aimed at interpreting the scientists who had changed our world in a language that was direct and approachable by the curious citizen.

She followed her first book with a biography, *Charles Darwin: A Great Life in Brief* (1954). *The Coil of Life: The Story of the Great Discoveries in the Life of Sciences* followed in 1961 and discussed the discovery of DNA and the issues of genetics that gave some insight into modern theories of evolution. She later published a biography of the nuclear physicist Niels Bohr, *Niels Bohr: The Man, the Science and the World They Created* (1966). Her book *Evolution* (1968) was part of a series published by Time-Life Books that was very popular at the time, meaning that her

writing on evolution was, for many Americans, their main introduction to the subject. After this, she published *The Earth We Live On* (1971), which was soon followed by *Ape into Man* (1973), which she co-authored with Sherwood L. Washburn (1911–2000) a University of California–Berkeley professor known as the father of modern primatology.

After she married Raymond Garbe (1906–1982), a distinguished architect, she turned her attention to architectural preservation in Chicago and made herself a spokesperson for saving and restoring architectural monuments. Moore served on the landmarks commission of Chicago and as president of the Chicago Architectural Foundation. She was named Chicago Preservationist of the Year in 1981 and was an honorary member of the American Institute of Architects.

MOORE'S RHETORIC

Like most journalists, Moore uses relatively short, and sometimes even one-sentence, paragraphs. This technique makes her writing more immediate and accessible. It also permits her to move from subject to subject rapidly. As the title, “Evolution Revised: A New Time and a New Way,” indicates, her main points relate to the current information we have about how humans evolved first in terms of time, and then in terms of biology. She reviews estimates of how many years ago humans first appeared and what it was about the skeleton of primates that made it possible for humans to walk upright.

This selection was the last chapter in a very popular book published in 1953, and while much new research has altered some of the dates, most of her conclusions still hold. The one thing she did not know is that the Piltdown Man, which was “discovered” in England, was in fact a hoax, a fact that was revealed only a short time after Moore’s book was published.

In addition to her direct, non-technical language and brisk paragraphs, Moore uses illustrations that are quite simple but that effectively illustrate her text. She uses important drawings of the basic anatomy we share with apes and then illustrates the cranial capacity of the important hominid forerunners to “modern man.” When she itemizes the cranial capacity of fossil discoveries as well as modern humans, we can see that the Piltdown Man was in the modern human range despite being supposedly more ancient than we. Although she doesn’t dwell on this, she may have had her own doubts about his authenticity because earlier in her book she reviews the current research and accepts the dating of the remains only reluctantly.

The most interesting point she makes first is not the issue of time — when the various hominids appeared — but the issue of anatomy. The drawings make it clear that, as Washburn established, the most important early evolutionary change that led to modern humans is the smaller pelvis, which is shaped differently from the ape family pelvis. The ape’s pelvis, as the drawing shows, forces the ape to move leaning forward, using its hands to balance and to navigate, the way modern gorillas do. The first apes that evolved with the smaller pelvis were able to

walk upright and to have their hands free to use tools and develop a life on land rather than being limited to trees.

Moore makes the point that until recent research in the 1940s it was thought that what caused humans to evolve from apes was not a question of skeletal anatomy, but a question of developing a large brain. But Moore and Washburn argue that the brain developed essentially because of the change in the pelvis, because only after this change were early humans able to use tools, which in turn caused early humans to evolve larger brain capacity.

New means of estimating prehistoric time have changed some of Moore's estimates on the time by which "modern man" emerged. She relied on carbon-14 dates, which she knew were limited, but today scientists estimate that South African ape men date to two million years ago, while the Java man dates to seven hundred thousand years ago. But these hominids are not as close to modern humans as are the Neanderthals, who flourished approximately four hundred thousand years ago. *Homo sapiens*, our species, may have emerged approximately three hundred thousand years ago and began colonizing Europe and Asia fifty thousand years ago. And while Moore may have suspected as much, we now know that there was some interbreeding between modern humans and the Neanderthal. However, today, we are the only human species that exists.

 PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of Ruth Moore's "Evolution Revised: A New Time and a New Way." Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. What did people in Darwin's time think was the most important cause of human evolution?
2. How long ago did people think modern humans first appeared?
3. What is the importance of cranial capacity?

Evolution Revised: A New Time and a New Way

Since 1950 the scientific evidence has pointed inescapably to one conclusion: man did not evolve in either the time or the way that Darwin and the modern evolutionists thought most probable. The physicists and the geologists by 1950 had clearly shown that the world is older and man is younger than anyone had dared to estimate before.

By that year, the men who dug into the ancient caves of South Africa and China, looking for traces of early man and the part-human, part-anthropoid races that had preceded him had succeeded. All the major steps in the evolution of man were for the first time filled in; the hitherto missing link had been found. But the missing link was not what science had expected; no one had imagined a being with the head of an ape and the body of a man.

What did it mean? The physicists and geologists and fossil-hunters did not say. They merely presented their dates and materials....

The question was insistent: what did it mean? How did the new findings affect the theory of evolution? This was a problem for the anthropologist, because the whole problem of man's origins and evolution was affected.

The surprising and almost unbelievable fossils that came from the banks of the Solo River, from Dragon-bone Hill, and from the

Sterkfontein caves¹ indicated that man had developed according to a new pattern, and that the pattern given him in the past — and currently, in many cases — was wrong at some critical points. The fossils supplied disconcerting proof that the development of the body came first, and the typical development of the brain later — that we had human bodies long before we reached human intelligence.

At first, such evidence from the ground was disbelieved, as evidence is likely to be when it runs counter to what the world has always thought.

When Eugène Dubois² found an undeniably human leg bone close by the skull of *Pithecanthropus erectus*, the world cried: “They can’t belong together.” The ridicule heaped upon his find, in large part because of this “discrepancy,” drove the Dutch physician into his thirty-year retreat.

The skepticism was almost as strong when similar bones began to be found with the skulls of Peking man.³

Broom ran headlong into the same feeling that there must be a mix-up when he discovered human-like pelvic bones in the same deposits with the unquestionably apelike skulls of the South African ape-men. For a number of years his work was not taken seriously because he ventured to claim that the ape-like creatures could have had near-human bodies and walked like men.

The conviction that the first, men began as replicas, however crude and primitive, of modern man was so deep that the evidence to the contrary long was discredited and discounted. It was a staple belief that many millions of years ago some of the anthropoids developed better brains, and that as they became smarter they came down out of the trees and gradually evolved into modern man.

Weidenreich⁴ was perhaps the first authority to point out that man's development might have followed a different course. In 1941 he wrote: "Little is known about the development of other parts of the skeleton, but it can be taken as definitely established that the erect posture and all that is connected with its adoption were attained long before [man reached his definitive form]. Thus the subsequent change of the skull, and above all that of the brain case, morphologically viewed, crowns the transformation in the true sense of the word, both in time and position."

But not until after the publication of the South African monographs and their appraisal by Clark⁵ of Oxford did science generally begin to grant that the body reached human form long before the brain.

Laboratory work at the University of Chicago and Harvard strongly confirmed the new pattern of evolution evinced by the fossils. Washburn,⁶ at Chicago, made a close study of the different body "complexes" of man and the apes.

In the arms, the ribs, and the shoulder girdle, he found, the two are very much alike. The important middle part of the body had

changed little; there men still were essentially apes. The specialist can recognize the technical differences between the shoulders of modern man and the ape, but the differences are not great.

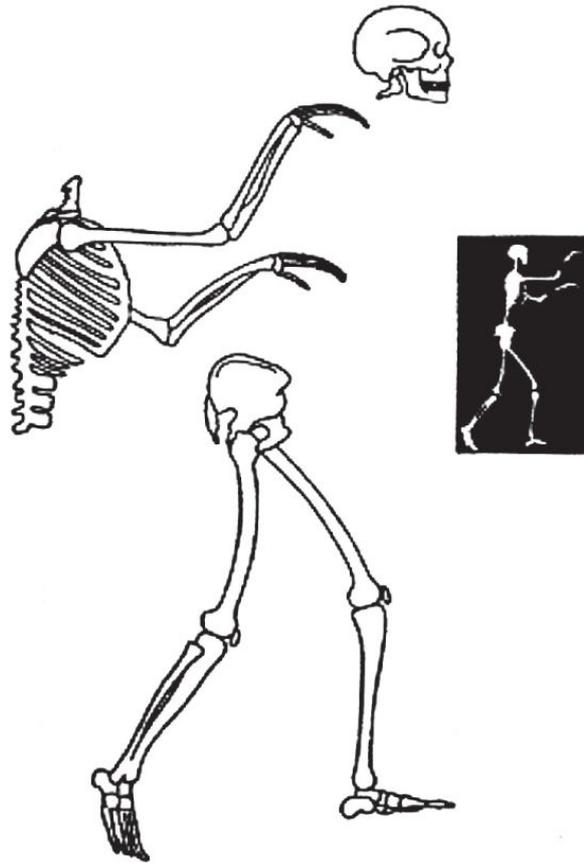
The most noticeable departure is in the hands, which Washburn, from the long-term anthropological viewpoint, considered of lesser importance.

Once man had become a biped, selection inevitably would have favored a hand differing from that of the tree-living primates. Even so, the human hand still shows a remarkable amount of the primitive grasping adaptation, particularly in the long fingers and nails.

As Washburn and a number of other anthropologists now see it, the middle part of the body, the trunk and arms, began to take on its essential form millions of years ago, at the time when the earliest primates climbed up into the trees. The story as they trace it goes, in outline, something like this:

The development of the ability to grasp with the hands and feet set the first primates apart from all the other primitive mammals and made it possible for them to take up life in the trees.

But life on the leafy green world above was a fairly restricted, though safe one. Without the great ranges over which the ground-living animals could move and mix, the tree-living primates came to differ widely from each other.



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The three great body “complexes” of man. Each section evolved differently. The arms, shoulders, and ribs changed little. In this middle part of the body men still are essentially apes. There was an all-important change in the pelvis-legs complex, a change that started man on a distinctive line of evolution. Man’s ability to walk on two legs freed his hands for the use of tools. The development of the third great complex, the brain, then followed.

Description

“The skeleton is dismembered into three parts: Skull and hands; hips and legs. An inset shows a whole skeleton.”

Many of them developed differences in the senses. In the trees, the strong sense of smell, the ears that cocked to the least sound, the hair that stood on end at the threat of danger, were not so important as on the ground. The monkeys with better eyes and

color vision were the ones that survived and left descendants. And gradually the brain changed from a primitive “smell-brain” to a more advanced “sight-brain.”

The monkeys thus equipped became abundantly successful in the Old World tropical forests and in most of the other areas to which they spread.⁷

Some of the numerous small bands of primates then began to develop a different mode of locomotion. Instead of hopping or running along, holding fast with hands and feet, they would swing along with a different motion of the arms. This mode of progress, called brachiation, involved anatomical changes in the wrist, elbow, shoulder, and thoracic region.

And thus the apes arose, and the shoulder, arms, and ribs took on the form that has been carried along almost unchanged to all of us today.

Washburn points out that no monkey anywhere in the world has such arms and shoulders. But every essential detail of this “complex” is shared by man and ape. He believes this crucially important change occurred about ten million years ago.

As the eons rolled by, the story continues, some of the apes that ate a more varied diet came down to the ground to live. Like their present-day descendants, they could take a few steps upright, perhaps even while holding a stick in one hand. But when they

wanted to cover space, down went the knuckles and they proceeded on all fours.

About a million years ago there came what many anthropologists regard as the most important of all the changes in the evolution of man.... For the first time, in all of time, the hands were free.

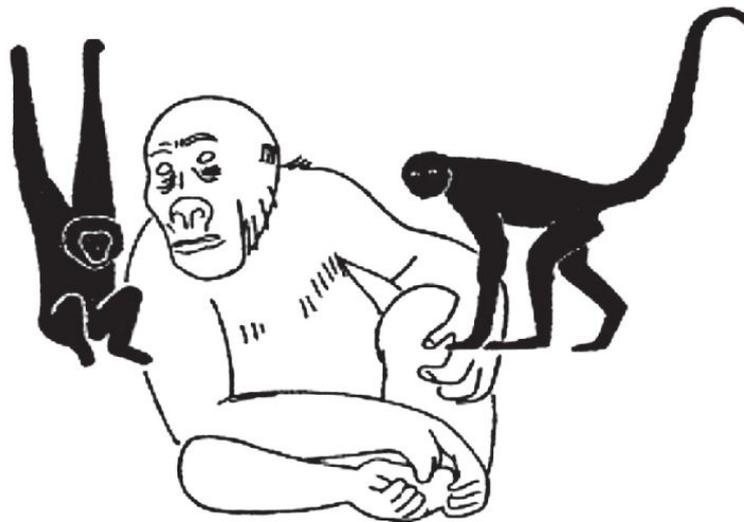
About a million years ago there came what many anthropologists regard as the most important of all the changes in the evolution of man, a change that forever afterward was to set man apart from his anthropoid ancestors.

Some of the big ground-living apes were born with a different kind of pelvis. It meant that they could walk upright, on two legs! For the first time, in all of time, the hands were free. They no longer had to be used for locomotion. These ground-living apes could use tools, for any implement held in the hands no longer had to be dropped every time more than a few steps were taken. "The fact that we number more than a few thousand bipeds living in the Old World tropics is due to the development of tools," said Washburn.

From this point on, all was changed; a new future had been cast. Natural selection was on a new basis, for a premium had been placed on brains as well as brawn. The most intelligent of the

biped man-apes, the ones that could most effectively use sticks and stones to beat off their enemies and kill their food, were the survivors and the parents of the next generation.

The pelvis that precipitated this all-important turn in evolution has a number of functions. It not only connects the legs and trunk in such a way that it controls gait; it gives origin to many muscles and serves as a bony birth canal.



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Gibbon, gorilla, and spider monkey. The gibbon and gorilla swing along with the arms — brachiate. The monkey, lacking the arm and shoulder development of the apes and man, runs along holding fast with arms, legs, and, in the case of the new world monkey, with the tail too.

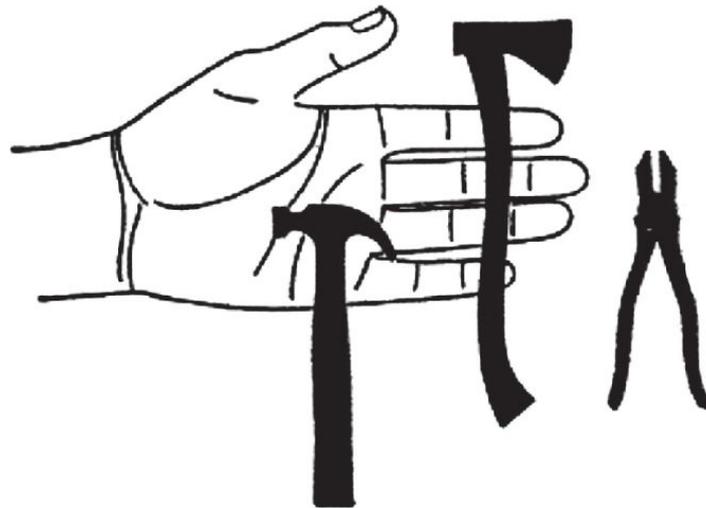
How any living creature stands and moves depends in large part upon the length of the pelvis and upon the angle at which it is inclined. In the apes it is long and slanting. In the ape-men and men it is shorter and more nearly upright.

Washburn believes that this whole vital evolutionary cycle began when some of the big ground-living apes were born with a shorter pelvis. When this basic genetic change occurred, the bone had to take on a more upright position to assure a safe birth for offspring. And once the pelvis is brought into such a position, the thigh muscles that attach to it are directly affected.

These muscles make the human step.

Washburn argues that the real difference between the walk of man and ape is not in the extent of the motion, but in the ability to finish the step with a drive. The muscle that provides the drive and swings back the thigh is the gluteus maximus, the muscle that arises from the posterior part of the pelvis. When the pelvis is short, the gluteus maximus pulls hard. A vigorous step is possible.

Negative evidence of how important the muscle is appears when it becomes paralyzed. A man who suffers such an accident cannot walk normally, though he can get around easily with a flexed gait similar to that of the apes. "The paralysis of the single muscle makes the human type of bipedal locomotion impossible," wrote Washburn. "It shows that the form and function of this particular muscle is critical in the evolution of man's posture and gait."



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Hand and tools.

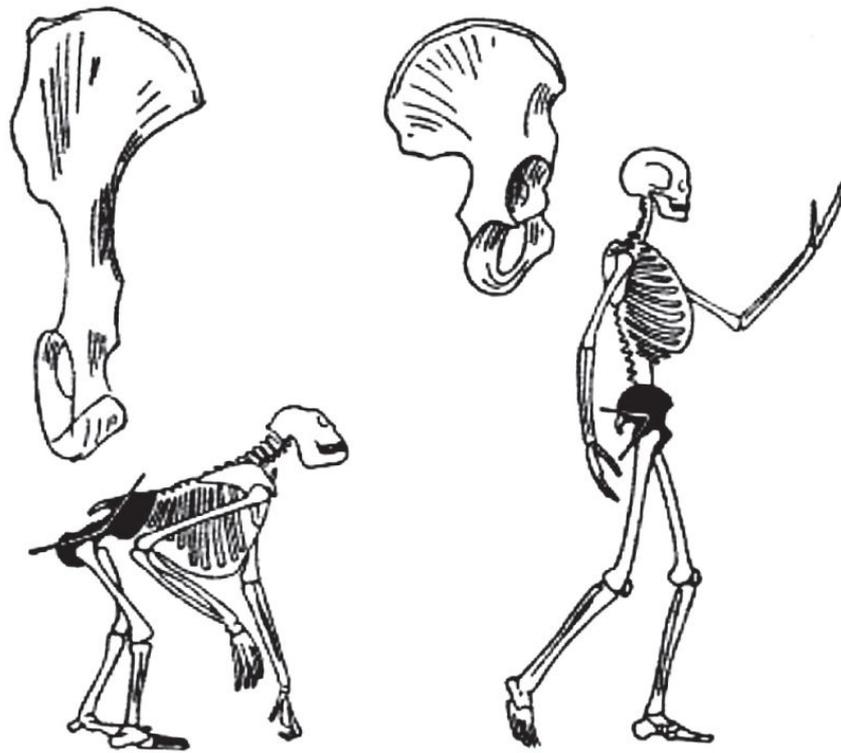
Carrying this argument back to what may have happened when the first apes began to walk, Washburn maintains that since selection is for function, the animals able to walk and use the hands most freely were the ones to survive. Hence selection favored the new type of pelvis. "It is my belief," the Chicago anthropologist concludes, "that this single change is the thing that initiates human evolution."

And the evidence backs up this theory with enlightening and revealing regularity. No living ape ever has been found with a human-type pelvis. Nor has any man or any of the fossil remains of man ever been discovered with an ape-type pelvis. In Java, in China, in South Africa, the pelvic bones found with the fossils placed in the human line were either human or near-human in type. There has been no exception, though the world long wanted to believe otherwise.

To put the point to the final test, Washburn has proposed a bold and intriguing experiment. He would like to operate on a laboratory ape and change its pelvis, much as the pelvis must have changed in evolution. If the operation succeeded, the ape would be able to walk on two legs! Its hands would be freed for the use of tools. The studies that could be made as this one animal relived in part a change through which the human race passed about a million years ago would hold exciting possibilities.

Preliminary studies have indicated that the operation is anatomically possible. Only the lack of laboratory funds has halted work along this amazing and promising line.

It was only after the trunk and the pelvis and legs had developed much as they are today that the brain began the spectacular growth that eventually was to change ape-man and primitive man into modern man. Until the 1940's science assumed that the growth of the brain always came first. Supposedly it was a better brain that enabled the mammals as a group to triumph over the reptiles when the two contended for the control of that ancient world of sea and jungle.



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One great change forever afterward set man apart from his anthropoid ancestors. It was in the pelvis. The apes, with their long slanting pelvis, can take only a few steps upright and must use the hands for locomotion. Man, because of his shorter pelvis, can stand and walk — he is a biped. His hands are then no longer needed for locomotion.

Description

The first pelvic bone is long and slanting. The skeleton that accompanies the image of pelvic bone shows a primitive man using both his legs and hands to move. The second pelvic bone is normal in size. The skeleton that accompanies the image of pelvic bone shows a modern human, walking on two legs.

And supposedly it was again the development of a better brain that led the apes out of the trees and onto the ground. Even Weidenreich, though he recognized that the evolution of the body

came first, rated the development of the brain as the primary factor in evolution.

The faith in the priority of the brain was first seriously jarred in 1948. In that year Professor Tilly Edinger⁸ of Harvard showed that the growth of the brain tends to follow in evolution. The earliest mammals, their fossil remains revealed, had brains no more advanced than those of the reptiles. Only later, after they had become typical mammals, did the brains reach modern mammalian proportions.

The horse, which Edinger studied in particular, attained its characteristic form, its long legs and teeth, well before the brain reached its final size.

And so it was with man. A comparison of the brain capacity of man and his forerunners sharply etches the pattern:

CRANIAL CAPACITY	
<i>Chimpanzee and gorilla</i>	325–650 (cubic centimeters)
<i>South African ape-man</i>	450–650
<i>Java man</i>	790–900
<i>Peking man</i>	900–1,200
<i>Neanderthal man</i>	1,100–1,500
<i>Modern man</i>	1,200–1,500

The South African ape-men — despite their near-human bodies and upright posture — were in the brain range of the apes.

“There is no doubt that all human fossils described so far have human pelvis and limb bones, and the man-apes were remarkably human in these features,” Washburn emphasized. “Therefore it appears that the differences in the brain between apes and man, just as those in dentition, were attained after full human status had been achieved in the limbs and trunk.”

In its final evolution the change in the brain was large. Between the ape-men and the emergence of modern man, the brain more than doubled in size. It grew from the 650-cubic-centimeter maximum of the apes and the ape-men to the modern top average of 1,500 cubic centimeters.

Some of the Neanderthal men of Europe had a brain capacity very close to that of modern man, if not within the modern range. They were well along the way....



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The growth of the brain. The ape (left) had a brain averaging less than 650 cubic centimeters. Primitive man reached a brain of 900 to 1,200 cubic centimeters. Modern man often has a brain of 1,500 cubic centimeters. The brain of modern man is more than twice as large as that of the ape.

It should be remembered, too, that many of the other fossils that once appeared to date man with a fairly sizable brain back in the

shadowy stretches of 500,000 to 1,000,000 years ago were also shown to belong to comparatively recent years.

How recent? Here Carbon-14 comes in. Although the Carbon-14 dates do not go beyond 25,000 years, they clearly indicate that the ice last extended down from the north both in Europe and in North America about 11,000 years ago. If this is correct, geologists hold that the final glaciation began less than 50,000 years ago.

This is an assumption, unsupported as yet by any absolute system of dating, but with the date of the final advance of the ice fixed, and with all the wealth of evidence left by the glaciers themselves, there is little speculation in estimating the duration of the last ice age.

The new timing indicates therefore that humans who had the requisite intelligence to be called men did not reach that high status until about 50,000 years ago. Modern man, then, is only about 50,000 years old.

The 50,000 years, of course, are approximate. But even if this estimate should later be enlarged to 75,000 or 100,000 years, modern man still would be the veriest of newcomers by all evolutionary standards. And if our 50,000-year tenure of the earth must be adjusted, the chances are that it will be shortened. Unpublished work and studies now going on in a number of universities are tending to pull the time of man's emergence as man even closer to today.

At the same time, the work of Washburn, Dice, and others demonstrated that man could have made the steep climb from ape-man to modern man in the shorter time now allotted.

In the light of these new understandings, much that has been taught about the time of man and his development must now be changed. Books must be rewritten and courses revised. For the new timing, the new fossil finds, the new pattern of evolution are bringing about a new and major revision in the theory of the origin of man.

The theory of evolution is not being weakened by this correction of past errors and misconceptions and by the opening of new understandings. On the contrary, the basic truths developed by Darwin and the brilliant succession of evolutionists who came after him are strengthened.

1953

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. What is the fossil record?
2. Where did scientists search for primate remains?
3. What was the missing link? What did it link?
4. Which part of the body achieved human form first?
5. Why is the shape of the pelvis critical to evolution?
6. What was the advantage of becoming bipedal?

7. What are the three great body complexes of humans?

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. One of the so-called fossil remains of early humans is the Piltdown Man. It was a hoax, but it was believed for a long time. Explain who was at the core of this hoax and why it was perpetrated. What were the circumstances of finding the remains, and how were they promoted as being early human fossils? How was the hoax discovered, and what was the response to the exposing of the fake “evidence”?
2. In [paragraph 36](#) Moore says that Washburn had a proposal to test his theory about the smaller pelvis being critical to the evolution of humans. He wanted to take an ape and operate on it to replace its ape pelvis with a human-shaped pelvis. He was certain that the ape would then walk upright as people do. What is your position on Washburn’s experiment? Moore said it was not carried out because of “a lack of laboratory funds.” Do you think it would have worked? Do you think it should be done?
3. Since Moore wrote her book, new finds have extended the fossil record. Among the most interesting are the Denisovans, a subspecies of *Homo sapiens* — the categorization is unclear at this moment. But their DNA is evident in the DNA of people of Papua and Australia. Who were the Denisovans, and what evidence indicates their relationship with modern humans? Why is the discovery of the Denisovans important?
4. Moore and the researchers she consulted indicated that tools were critical in the evolution of humans. Write an essay that reveals what we know today about the earliest tools that humans were able to devise and use. What do scientists tell us about the kinds of advances that humans made based on the tools they created? Why is the use of tools so important? Which tool do you think was the most interesting and revealing about the way early people lived and worked?

5. Neanderthal DNA has been found in most of the genetic inheritance of Europeans and in some Asians. They are now extinct and seem to have been in competition with our species, *Homo sapiens*. Bring us up to date in an essay that explains who the Neanderthals were and why it is important to know about them. How do they relate to our understanding of the process of evolution? What is most interesting to you about their nature?
6. Not everyone accepts the findings of Darwin and the last one hundred fifty years of fossil discoveries and the most recent DNA evidence of evolution. What are the arguments against evolution, and how strong do you think they are? If possible, interview someone who does not accept the evidence of human evolution and explain their views. Why is it important for some people to ignore the evidence of evolution? What is your personal view?

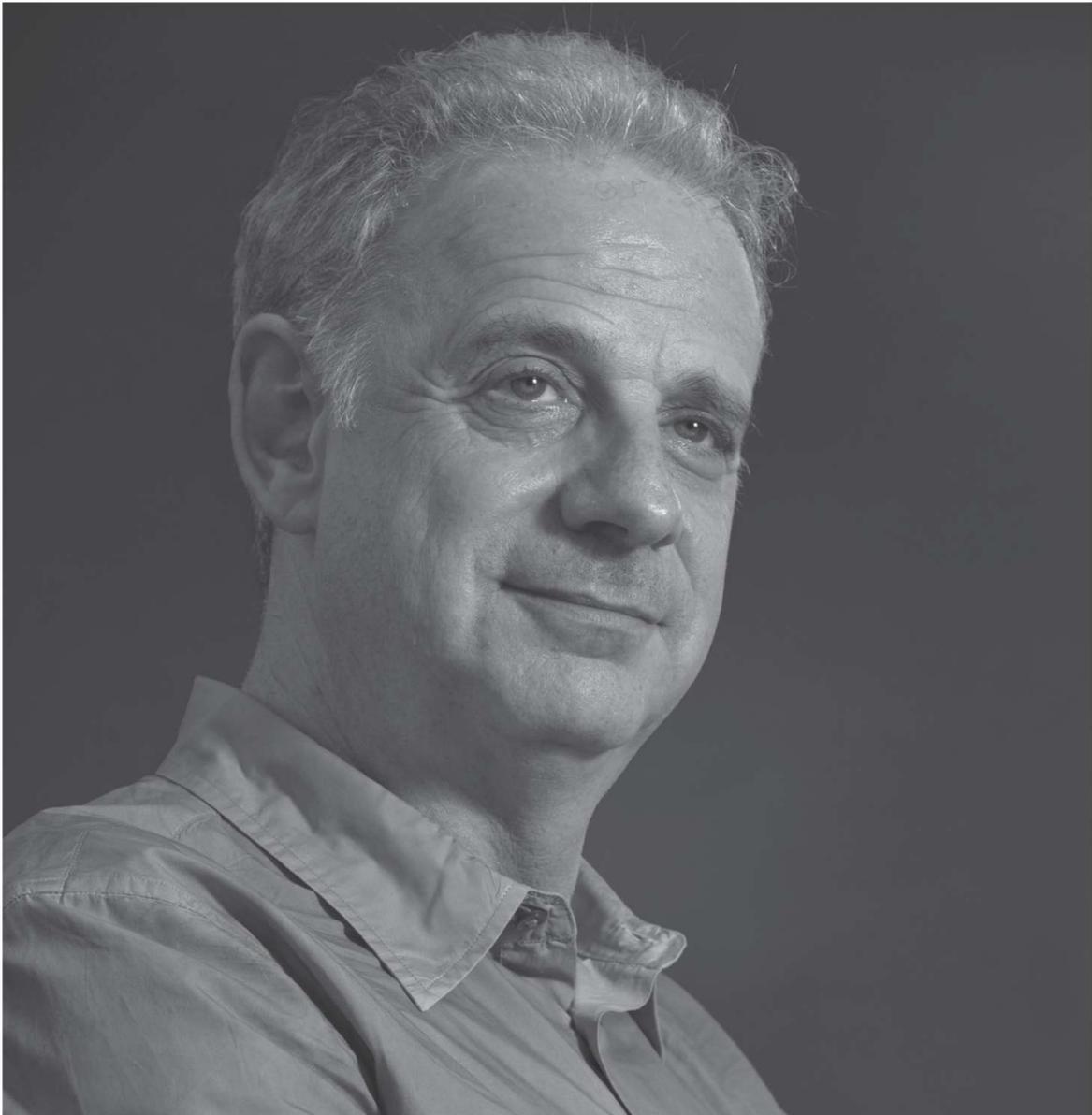
■ ■ CONNECTIONS

1. After reading Darwin's essay, "[Natural Selection](#)", comment on the comparison of Moore's argument about anatomy and time with Darwin's argument about natural selection. Which of these arguments is most convincing? What rhetorical techniques does each use that most help them convince their readers? What kinds of evidence does each use, and how effective is their use of it? If you doubted evolution as an explanation for life as we know it, which argument would be more convincing?
2. Moore and Darwin both examine differences between male and female anatomy in plants, animals, and humans as they build their arguments for evolution and natural selection. How do they use these categories differently than the writers in the "Gender" theme of this collection? How might Butler ("[Undoing Gender](#)") or Lorber ("[Paradoxes of Gender](#)") engage with Moore and Darwin on the question of gender? Where do their definitions of sex and gender diverge? Are there any points of commonality?
3. Ruth Moore, Rachel Carson ("[The Obligation to Endure](#)"), and James Gleick ("[What Is Time?](#)") are all journalists writing about scientific

matters of great complexity. Write an essay that examines the rhetorical techniques these writers use to explain complicated ideas and theories. Which of them is the clearest writer? What techniques do they use to make their writing clear? Which of them explains the ideas they discuss most satisfactorily?



James Gleick *What Is Time?*



Colin McPherson/Corbis Entertainment/Getty Images

LIKE RUTH MOORE, JAMES GLEICK (b. 1954) is a journalist whose expertise at researching, understanding, and explaining complex scientific ideas has made him one of the most widely read science writers living today. He was educated at Harvard University, and while writing for the university newspaper *The Harvard Crimson*, he earned his degree in English and linguistics.

After college he went to Minneapolis to write for a newspaper that lasted about a year. He then returned home to New York to join the *New York Times*. For most of his ten years there he worked on the Metropolitan Desk, before becoming the *Times's* science writer. His work has appeared in numerous other newspapers and magazines, and he remains an opinion writer for the *Times*.

His first book was immediately successful: *Chaos: Making a New Science* (1987; rev. 2008) aimed at helping readers understand something about the modern mathematical descriptions of the world implied by research into quantum mechanics and the physics of uncertainty. The idea that the universe is chaotic and uncertain is a frightening concept for traditional thinkers who have depended on a world based on the predictable physics of Isaac Newton and nineteenth-century scientists. When mathematical models of quantum physics demonstrated that an atomic particle could be at two places at once, the linearity and simplicity of conventional physics had to make room for the uncertainty principles that Gleick examined in his book. Gleick made the term *butterfly effect* a common expression. He explained that the universe is connected in such complex ways that a butterfly waving its wings in one place could cause intense weather conditions far away. Edward Lorenz (1917–2008) coined the term, but Gleick introduced it in his book, explaining that small events contributed to large outcomes and there is no way to predict exactly the result of such events. The results may be chaotic in part because there are too many tiny contributing events to predict any major outcome. Change one detail and everything will change.

Gleick's work has been widely influential: he inspired the character Ian Malcolm in the film *Jurassic Park* (1993) and has gone on to write several books that introduce important modern scientists to a wide audience. *Genius: The Life and Science of Richard Feynman* (1992) is the biography of one of the most colorful and important modern mathematicians. Feynman worked on the atomic bomb in the 1940s and won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1965. He was famous for having explained the cause of the space shuttle *Challenger* disaster in 1986. Another biography, Gleick's *Isaac Newton* (2003) also investigated the life of a well-known scientist and made Newton's work accessible for the general public.

Gleick's *Time Travel* (2016), from which the following selection comes, is a careful examination of the physics involved in understanding the nature of time. The novelist H. G. Wells (1866–1946), the author of *The Time Machine* (1895), is looked to as a catalyst for the explosion of literature that deals with time travel. Einstein and other physicists have examined the nature of time and demonstrated that it is by no means simple and easy to understand. The question of time travel has been intriguing enough that some thinkers have felt it was possible in a world of black holes and uncertainty. But Stephen Hawking (1942–2018) examined the equations that might have suggested time travel is possible and determined there was no way to go backward in time. He pointed whimsically to the fact that we have not been visited by time tourists and explained that we never would be.

GLEICK'S RHETORIC

“What Is Time?” is an expedition that sets out to answer its own question by using development by definition. Gleick begins by examining all the definitions that have been proposed, resorting even to the many definitions that exist in dictionaries. He begins by consulting the earliest English dictionary, then the most famous eighteenth-century dictionary, by Samuel Johnson, and after referencing American dictionaries he brings up the OED, the Oxford English Dictionary, which is the most complete dictionary of any language. Simple definitions, like “Time is nature’s way to keep everything from happening all at once,” jog along with “There is no time.” The extreme definitions, or attempts at a definition, occupy the first several pages of his essay, and all of them tend to reveal the complexity of the question. Scientists, writers, and encyclopedias all offer explanations that, as Gleick points out, tend to incorporate the very word *time*, in the definition, thus making it almost impossible to satisfy our need to actually know what time is except by our own perception of it. As he implies, the problem with time is like the problem with poetry; we all know what it is but we can’t come up with a final definition.

However, this conclusion does not stop Gleick from trying. After he explains how inadequate the dictionaries are, he points to the unusual observation that time has a political dimension. The British parliament had to regularize the understanding of time in 1880 so that some kind of certainty could be applied to travel and legal regulations that imposed curfews, openings, and closings. The establishment of Greenwich Mean Time in Greenwich, England, is even today the standard by which time is measured in England. Other nations, such as China, have their own system,

and rather than observing different time zones, China uses one zone for the entire nation, which would, from the British point of view, encompass as many as six time zones.

Clearly one of Gleick's most obvious rhetorical strategies is to introduce and discuss the explanations of a wide range of authorities. Gleick reviews the classical Greek philosophers, such as Plato, who defined time as "A moving image of eternity," but put off a thorough definition that went any further than talking about hours, days, and years. Early English scientists all had something to say about time, eventually relying on the clock as an instrument of measurement and suggesting that time is what a clock - measures — an interesting but insufficient explanation. The great scientists Galileo Galilei and Isaac Newton, both of whom changed humanity's understanding of the world, appealed to astronomical measurements but still could not fashion a satisfying definition.

Modern physicists approach the problem with the question of whether time exists at all or if it is real. This is a conundrum, but Gleick pursues this avenue robustly, introducing some conflicting ideas leading up to Einstein, who seems to support some contemporary views that suggest time "is only a stubbornly persistent illusion" ([para. 27](#)). When Gleick gets to discuss the quantum assumptions that demand a baffling uncertainty principle, we are introduced to the MWI, or Many Worlds Interpretation, which implies that everything that could happen will happen in many parallel universes. Suddenly the concept of time

is so extraordinarily expanded that the idea that time may be an illusion almost sounds appealing.

Gleick's method is to review as much of what has been said about time as he can in these pages. He quotes one authority after another, covers one school of thought in philosophy after another, and then covers the many different scientific explanations that have been proposed since the beginning of modern science in the seventeenth century all the way to the complexities of the current thinking in quantum mechanics, which can only be expressed in terms of advanced mathematical equations. These equations, complex as they are, and unexpected as they are, explain the way the universe works. But they still make it difficult to explain what time is.

PREREADING QUESTIONS: WHAT TO READ FOR

The following prereading questions may help you anticipate key issues in the discussion of James Gleick's "What Is Time?" Keeping them in mind during your first reading of the selection should help focus your attention.

1. How do dictionaries try to define time?
2. What did major scientists use to measure time?
3. Why do modern physicists question the reality of time?

What Is Time?

Why is it so difficult — so degradingly difficult — to bring the notion of Time into mental focus and keep it there for inspection? What an effort, what fumbling, what irritating fatigue!

— Vladimir Nabokov (1969)

People keep asking what time is, as if the right combination of words could slip the lock and let in the light. We want a fortune-cookie definition, a perfect epigram. Time is “the landscape of experience,” says Daniel Boorstin.¹ “Time is but memory in the making,” says Nabokov.² “Time is what happens when nothing else does” — Dick Feynman.³ “Time is nature’s way to keep everything from happening all at once,” says Johnny Wheeler or Woody Allen. Martin Heidegger⁴ says, “There is no time.”⁵

What is time? *Time* is a word. The word refers to something, or some things, but surprisingly often the conversation goes off track when people forget whether they’re arguing about the word or the thing(s). Five hundred years of dictionaries have created the assumption that every word must have a definition, so what is time? “A non-spatial continuum in which events occur in apparently irreversible succession from the past through the present to the future” (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, fifth edition). A committee of lexicographers labored over those twenty words and must have debated almost every one. Nonspatial? That word is not to be found in this very dictionary, but all right, time is not space. Continuum? Presumably

time is a continuum — but is that known for sure? “Apparently irreversible” seems a hedge. You sense they’re trying to tell us something they hope we already know. The challenge is not so much to inform us as to offer some discipline and care.

Other authorities offer entirely different constructions. Not one of them is wrong. What is time? “The general term for the experience of duration,” according to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (many editions). The very first English dictionary, Robert Cawdrey’s⁶ in 1604, avoided the problem and skipped right from *thwite* (“shave”) to *timerous* (“fearefull, abashed”). Samuel Johnson⁷ said “the measure of duration.” (And duration? “Continuance, length of time.”) A 1960 children’s book trimmed the definition to a single word: *Time Is When*.⁸

The people who compose definitions for dictionaries try to avoid the circularity that comes when they use the very word they are defining. With time it’s unavoidable. The lexicographers of the *OED*⁹ throw up their hands. They divide “time” (only the noun, not the interjection¹⁰ or the obscure conjunction) into thirty-five distinct senses and almost a hundred subsenses, including: *a point in time; an extent of time; a specific period of time; time available ...; the amount of time taken up by something; and time viewed as a medium through which travel into the past or future is hypothesized or imagined to be possible.* (“Cf. *time travel*.”) They are covering all the bases. Perhaps their best effort is sense number ten: “The fundamental quantity of which periods or intervals of existence are conceived as consisting, and which is used to quantify their duration.” Even that definition merely

postpones the circularity. *Duration, period, and interval* are defined in terms of time. The lexicographers know very well what time is, until they try to define it.

Like all words, time has boundaries, by which I don't mean hard and impenetrable shells but porous edges.

Like all words, *time* has boundaries, by which I don't mean hard and impenetrable shells but porous edges. It maps weirdly between languages. A Londoner might say, "He did it fifty times, at the very least," while in Paris, where the word for time is *temps*, fifty times is *cinquante fois*. Meanwhile, when the weather is good, the Parisian says, *C'est beau temps*. A New Yorker thinks the time and the weather are different things.¹¹ And that is just the beginning. Many languages use a separate word to ask "What is the time?" as opposed to "What is time?"

In 1880 the United Kingdom enacted a legislative definition of time, the Statutes (Definition of Time) Act. This declared itself to be "an Act to remove doubts as to the meaning of Expressions relative to Time occurring in Acts of Parliament, deeds, and other legal instruments." It was enacted "by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal [Time Lords!], and Commons" If only these wise men and woman could have solved the problem by fiat. Removing

doubts about the meaning of time is an ambitious goal. Alas, it turns out that they were not dealing with *What is time?* but only *What is the time?* The time in Great Britain, as defined by the act, is Greenwich mean time.¹³

What is time? At the dawn of the written word, Plato struggled with the question. “A moving image of eternity,” he said. He could name the parts of time: “days and nights and months and years.” Moreover:

When we say that what has become is become and what becomes is becoming, and that what will become is about to become and that the nonexistent is nonexistent — all these are inaccurate modes of expression. But perhaps this whole subject will be more suitably discussed on some other occasion.

Here Aristotle, too, found himself in difficulties. “To start, then: the following considerations would make one suspect that it either does not exist at all or barely, and in an obscure way. One part of it has been and is not, while the other is going to be and is not yet.” The past has gone out of existence, the future has not yet been born, and time is made up of these “things which do not exist.” On the other hand, he said — looked at differently — time seems to be a consequence of change, or motion. It is “the measure” of change. *Earlier* and *later*, *faster* and *slower* — these are words that are “defined by” time. *Fast* is a lot of motion in a little time, *slow* is a little motion in a lot of time. As for time itself: “time is not defined by time.”

Later, Augustine,¹⁴ like Plato, contrasted time with eternity. Unlike Plato, he could hardly stop thinking about time. It obsessed him. His way of explaining was to say that he understood time very well, until the moment he tried to explain. Let us reverse Augustine's process: stop trying to explain and instead take stock of what we know. Time is not defined by time — that needn't paralyze us. When we leave aside the search for epigrams and definitions, it turns out we know a great deal.¹⁵

We know that time is imperceptible. It is immaterial. We cannot see it, hear it, or touch it. If people say they perceive the passing of time, that's just a figure of speech. They perceive something else — the clock ticking on the mantel, or their own heartbeat, or other manifestations of the many biological rhythms below the level of consciousness — but whatever time is, it lies outside the grasp of our senses. Robert Hooke¹⁷ made this very point to the Royal Society in 1682:

I would query by what Sense it is we come to be informed of Time; for all the Information we have from the senses are momentary, and only last during the Impressions made by the Object. There is therefore yet wanting a Sense to apprehend Time; for such a Notion we have.¹⁸

Yet we experience time in a way that we do not experience space. Close your eyes, and space disappears: you may be anywhere; you may be big or small. Yet time continues. "I am listening not to Time itself but to the blood current coursing through my brain, and thence through the veins of the neck heartward, back to the seat of private throes which have no relation to Time," says Nabokov. Cut off from the world, with no sensory perception, we may still

count the time. Indeed, we habitually quantify time (“... and yet we conceive of it as a Quantity,” said Hooke). This leads to a plausible definition: *Time is what clocks measure*. But what is a clock? *An instrument for the measurement of time.*¹⁹ The snake swallows its tail again.

Once we conceive of time as a quantity, we can store it up, apparently. We save it, spend it, accumulate it, and bank it. We do all this quite obsessively nowadays, but the notion is at least four hundred years old. Francis Bacon,²¹ 1612: “To choose Time, is to save Time.” The corollary of saving time is wasting it. Bacon again: “Prolix and florid Harangues ... and other personal Speeches are great Wasters of Time.” No one would have begun thinking about time as a bankable commodity who was not already familiar with money. *Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back, / Wherein he puts alms for oblivion*. But is time really a commodity? Or is this just another shabby analogy, along with time the river?

We go back and forth between being time’s master and its victim. Time is ours to use, and then we are at its mercy. *I wasted time, and now doth time waste me*, says Richard II; *For now hath time made me his numbering clock*. If you say that an activity wastes time, implying a substance in finite supply, and then you say that it fills time, implying a sort of container, have you contradicted yourself? Are you confused? Are you committing a failure of logic? None of those. On the contrary, you are a clever creature, when it comes to time, and you can keep more than one idea in your head. Language is imperfect; poetry, perfectly imperfect. We can

occupy the time and pass the time in the same breath. We can devour time or languish in its slow-chapp'd power.

Newton,²² who invented the idea of mass, knew that time didn't have any, that it's not a substance, yet he said that time "flows." He wrote this in Latin: *tempus fluit*. The Romans said *tempus fugit*, time flees, or at any rate that motto began appearing on English sundials in the Middle Ages. Newton would have seen that. True, the hours speed by and are gone, once we learn to measure them, but how can time flee? It's another figure of speech. And how can time flow, if it has no substance?

Newton took pains to distinguish two kinds of time. We might call them physical time and psychological time, but he lacked those words, so he had to struggle a bit. The first kind he called, with a flurry of adjectives, "time absolute true and mathematical" (*tempus absolutum verum & Mathematicum*). The other was time as conceived by the common people — the *vulgus* — and this he called "relative" and "apparent." True time — mathematical time — he inferred from a technological feature of his world, the consistency of clocks. He and the clockmakers both leaned on Galileo²³ here — it was Galileo who established that a swinging pendulum of a given length divides time into regular pieces. He measured time by using his pulse. Shortly thereafter, doctors began using clocks to time pulses. The ancients looked to the heavens for measuring time: the sun, the stars, the moon — those were reliable. They gave us our days, months, and years. (When Joshua needed more time to smite the Amorites, he asked God to halt the sun and moon in their tracks — "Sun, stand thou still upon

Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.” Who among us has not wanted to stop time?) Now machinery takes over the reckoning.

Another circularity creeps in — a chicken-and-egg problem. Time is how we measure motion. Motion is how we measure time. Newton tried to escape that by fiat. He made Absolute Time axiomatic. He needed a reliable backbone for his laws of motion. The first law: an object moves at a constant velocity, unless acted upon by some external force. But what is velocity? Distance per unit time. When Newton declared that time flows equably, *aequabiliter fluit*, he meant that we can count on unit time. Hours, days, months, years: they are the same everywhere and always. In effect, he imagined the universe as its own clock, the cosmic clock, perfect and mathematical. He wanted to say that when two of our earthly clocks differ, it’s because of some fault in the clocks, not because the universe speeds up and slows down hither and yon.

Now it is fashionable among physicists and philosophers to ask whether time is even “real” — whether it “exists.” The question is debated at conferences and symposia and analyzed in books. I have put quotation marks around those words because they are so problematic in themselves. The nature of reality hasn’t been settled either. We know what it means to say that unicorns are not real. Likewise Santa Claus. But when scholars say time is not real, they mean something different. They haven’t lost faith in their wristwatches or their calendars. They use “real” as code for something else: absolute, special, or fundamental.

Not everyone would agree that physicists like to debate the reality of time. Sean Carroll²⁴ writes, “Perhaps surprisingly, physicists are not overly concerned with adjudicating which particular concepts are ‘real’ or not.” Leave that to philosophers, I think he means. “For concepts like ‘time,’ which are unambiguously part of a useful vocabulary we have for describing the world, talking about ‘reality’ is just a bit of harmless gassing.” The business of physicists is to construct theoretical models and test them against empirical data. The models are effective and powerful but remain artificial. They themselves are a kind of language. Still, physicists do get caught up in debating the nature of reality. How could they not? “The nature of time” was the subject of an international essay contest organized in 2008 by FQXi, an institute devoted to foundational questions of physics and cosmology. One winning essay, chosen from more than a hundred, was Carroll’s own: “What If Time Really Exists?” This was a deliberately contrarian exercise. “There is a venerable strain of intellectual history that proclaims that time does not exist,” he noted. “There is a strong temptation to throw up one’s hands and proclaim the whole thing is an illusion.”

A landmark on that road is an essay published in 1908 by the journal *Mind*, “The Unreality of Time,” by John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart.²⁵ He was an English philosopher, by then a fixture at Trinity College, Cambridge.²⁶ McTaggart was said (by Norbert Wiener²⁷) to have made a cameo appearance in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* as the Dormouse, “with his pudgy hands, his sleepy air, and his sidelong walk.” He had been arguing for years that our common view of time is an illusion, and now he

made his case. “It doubtless seems highly paradoxical to assert that Time is unreal,” he began. But consider ...

He contrasts two different ways of talking about “positions in time” (or “events”). We may talk about them relative to the present — the speaker’s present. The death of Queen Anne²⁸ (his example) is in the past, for us, but at one time it lay in the future and then came round to the present. “Each position is either Past, Present, or Future,” writes McTaggart. This he labels, for later convenience, the A series.

Alternatively, we may talk about the positions in time relative to one another. “Each position is Earlier than some, and Later than some, of the other positions.” The death of Queen Anne is later than the death of the last dinosaur but earlier than the publication of “The Unreality of Time.” This is the B series. The B series is fixed. It is permanent. The order can never change. The A series is changeable: “an event, which is now present, was future and will be past.”

Many people found this A series and B series distinction persuasive, and it lives on robustly in the philosophical literature. By a chain of reasoning McTaggart uses it to prove that time does not exist. The A series is essential to time, because time depends on change, and only the A series allows for change. On the other hand, the A series contradicts its own premises, because the same events possess the properties of pastness and futureness. “Neither time as a whole, nor the A series and B series, really exist” is his apparently inevitable conclusion. (I could say “was”

because the paper appeared in 1908. But I can also say “is” because the paper exists in libraries and online and, more abstractly still, in the fast-expanding tapestry of interwoven ideas and facts that we call our culture.)

You may have noticed — and if so, you’re more observant than most of his readers — that McTaggart began by assuming the thing he is trying to prove. He considered all *positions in time*, all possible *events*, as if they were already laid out in a sequence, points on a geometer’s line, *M, N, O, P*, arranged from the point of view of God or the logician. Call this the eternal point of view, or eternalism. The future is just like the past: you can see it in the mind’s eye, neatly diagrammed. Our experience to the contrary is merely a product of mental states: memories, perceptions, and anticipations, which we experience as “pastness,” “presentness,” and “futura.” An eternalist says that reality is timeless. So time is unreal.

In fact this is a mainstream view of modern physics. I won’t say *the* mainstream view — in these tempestuous days no one can say for sure what that is. Many of the most respected and established physicists espouse the following:

- The equations of physics contain no evidence for a flow of time.
- The laws of science do not distinguish between the past and the future.
- *Therefore* — do we have a syllogism?²⁹ —
- Time is not real.

The observer — physicist or philosopher — stands outside and looks in. The human experience of time is suspended for abstract observation. Past, present, and future are bounded in a nutshell.

We experience time in our bones. We remember the past, we await the future.

And what of our persistent impressions to the contrary? We experience time in our bones. We remember the past, we await the future. But the physicist notes that we are fallible organisms, easily fooled and not to be trusted. Our prescientific ancestors experienced the flat earth and traveling sun. Could our experience of time be equally naïve? Perhaps — but scientists have to come back to the evidence of our senses in the end. They must test their models against experience.

“People like us, who believe in physics,” Einstein³⁰ said, “know that the distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.” *Who believe in physics* — I detect something wistful in that. “In physics,” repeats Freeman Dyson,³¹ “the division of space-time into past, present, and future is an illusion.” These formulations retain a bit of humility that is sometimes lost in the quoting. Einstein was consoling a bereaved sister and son, and perhaps thinking as well of his own pending mortality. Dyson was expressing hopeful bonds of kinship with people of the past and people of the future: “They are our neighbors in the universe.” These are beautiful thoughts, but they

were not intended as final statements about the nature of reality. As Einstein himself said on an earlier occasion, “Time and space are modes by which we think, and not conditions in which we live.”

There is something perverse about a scientist’s believing that the future is already complete — locked down tight, no different from the past. The first motivation for the scientific enterprise, the prime directive, is to gain some control over our headlong tumble into an unknown future. For ancient astronomers to forecast the movements of heavenly bodies was vindication and triumph; to predict an eclipse was to rob it of its terror; medical science has labored for centuries to eradicate diseases and extend the lifetimes that fatalists call fixed; in the first powerful application of Newton’s laws to earthly mechanics, students of gunnery computed the parabolic trajectories of cannonballs, the better to send them to their targets; twentieth-century physicists not only managed to change the course of warfare but then dreamt of using their new computing machines to forecast and even control the earth’s weather. Because, why not? We are pattern-recognition machines, and the project of science is to formalize our intuitions, do the math, in hopes not just of understanding — a passive, academic pleasure — but of bending nature, to the limited extent possible, to our will.

Remember Laplace’s³² perfect intelligence, vast enough to comprehend all the forces and the positions and to submit them to analysis. “To it nothing would be uncertain, and the future as the past would be present to its eyes.” This is how the future becomes indistinguishable from the past. Tom Stoppard³³ joins the parade

of philosophers wittily paraphrasing him: “If you could stop every atom in its position and direction, and if your mind could comprehend all the actions thus suspended, then if you were really, *really* good at algebra you could write the formula for all the future; and although nobody can be so clever as to do it, the formula must exist just as if one could.” It bears asking — because so many modern physicists still believe something like this — why? If no intelligence can be so comprehensive, no computer can do so much computing, why must we treat the future as though it were predictable?

The implicit answer, sometimes explicit, is that the universe is its own computer. It computes its own destiny, step by step, bit by bit (or qubit by qubit). The computers we know, in the early twenty-first century, not counting the tantalizing quantum variety, operate deterministically. A given input always leads to the same output. Our input, again, is the totality of initial conditions and our program is the laws of nature. These are the whole kit and caboodle: the entire future is already there. No information needs to be added, nothing remains to be discovered. There shall be no novelty, no surprise. Only the clanking of the logical gears remains — a mere formality.

Yet we have learned that in the real world things are always a little messy. Measurements are approximate. Knowledge is imperfect. “The parts have a certain loose play upon one another,” said William James,³⁴ “so that the laying down of one of them does not necessarily determine what the others shall be.” James might have been pleasantly surprised by the revelations of quantum

physics: the exact states of particles can *never* be perfectly known; uncertainty reigns; probability distributions replace the perfect clockwork dreamt of by Laplace. “It admits that possibilities may be in excess of actualities,” James might have said — that is, he did say it, but in advance of the actual science — “and that things not yet revealed to our knowledge may really in themselves be ambiguous.” Just so. A physicist with a Geiger counter can never guess when the next click will come. You might think that our modern quantum theorists would join James in cheering indeterminism.

The computers in our thought experiments, if not always the computers we own, are deterministic because people have designed them that way. Likewise, *the laws of science are deterministic because people have written them that way*. They have an ideal perfection that can be attained in the mind or in the Platonic realm but not in the real world. The Schrödinger equation,³⁵ the screwdriver of modern physics, manages the uncertainties by bundling up the probabilities into a unit, a wave function. It’s a ghostly abstract object, this wave function. A physicist can write it as Ψ and not worry too much about the contents. “Where did we get that from?” said Richard Feynman. “Nowhere. It’s not possible to derive it from anything you know. It came out of the mind of Schrödinger.” It just was, and is, astoundingly effective. And once you have it, the Schrödinger equation returns determinism to the process. Calculations are deterministic. Given proper input, good quantum physicists can compute the output with certainty and keep on computing. The only trouble comes in the act of returning from the idealized

equations to the real world they are meant to describe. Finally we have to parachute in from the Platonic abstract mathematics to the sublunary stuff on laboratory benches. At that point, when an act of measurement is required, the wave function “collapses,” as physicists say. Schrödinger’s cat is either alive or dead. According to a limerick:

It comes as a total surprise

That what we learn from the Ψ 's

Not the fate of the cat

But related to that:

The best we can ever surmise.

This collapse of the wave function is the trigger for a special kind of argumentation in quantum physics, not about the mathematics but about the philosophical underpinnings. What can this possibly mean? is the basic problem, and the various approaches are called interpretations. There is the Copenhagen interpretation, first among many. The Copenhagen approach is to treat the collapse of the wave function as an awkward necessity — just a kludge to live with.³⁶ The slogan for this interpretation is “Shut up and calculate.” There are the Bohmian interpretation, the quantum Bayesian, the objective collapse, and — last but definitely not least — the many worlds. “Go to any meeting, and it is like being in a holy city in great tumult,” says the physicist Christopher Fuchs.³⁸ “You will find all the religions with all their priests pitted in holy war.”

The many-worlds interpretation — MWI,³⁹ to those in the know — is a fantastic piece of make-believe championed by some of the smartest physicists of our time. They are the intellectual heirs of Hugh Everett,⁴⁰ if not Borges.⁴¹ “The MWI is the one with all the glamour and publicity,” wrote Philip Ball,⁴² the English science writer (ex-physicist), in 2015. “It tells us that we have multiple selves, living other lives in other universes, quite possibly doing all the things that we dream of but will never achieve (or never dare). Who could resist such an idea?” (He can, for one.) The many-worlds champions are like hoarders, unable to throw anything away. There is no such thing as a path not taken. Everything that can happen does happen. All possibilities are realized, if not here, then in another universe. In cosmology universes also abound. Brian Greene⁴³ has named nine different types of parallel universes: “quilted,” “inflationary,” “brane,” “cyclic,” “landscape,” “quantum,” “holographic,” “simulated,” and “ultimate.” The MWI cannot be demolished by means of logic. It’s too appealing: any argument you can make against it has already been considered and (in their minds) refuted by its distinguished advocates.

To me, the most effective physicists are the ones who retain a degree of modesty about their program. Bohr said, “In our description of nature the purpose is not to disclose the real essence of the phenomena but only to track down, so far as it is possible, relations between the manifold aspects of our experience.” Feynman said, “I have approximate answers and possible beliefs and different degrees of certainty about different things, but I’m not absolutely sure of anything.” Physicists make mathematical models, which are generalizations and

simplifications — by definition incomplete, stripped down from the cornucopia of reality. The models expose patterns in the messiness and capitalize upon them. The models themselves are timeless; they exist unchanging. A Cartesian graph⁴⁴ plotting time and distance contains its own past and future. The Minkowskian space-time⁴⁵ picture is timeless. The wave function is timeless. These models are ideal, and they are frozen. We can comprehend them within our minds or our computers. The world, on the other hand, remains full of surprises.

William Faulkner⁴⁶ said, “The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed.” Scientists do that, too, and sometimes they forget they are using artificial means. You can say Einstein discovered that the universe is a four-dimensional space-time continuum. But it’s better to say, more modestly, Einstein discovered that we can describe the universe as a four-dimensional space-time continuum and that such a model enables physicists to calculate almost everything, with astounding exactitude, in certain limited domains. Call it spacetime *for the convenience of reasoning*. Add spacetime to the arsenal of metaphors.

You can say the equations of physics make no distinction between past and future, between forward and backward in time. But if you do, you are averting your gaze from the phenomena dearest to our hearts.⁴⁷ You leave for another day or another department the puzzles of evolution, memory, consciousness, life itself. Elementary processes may be reversible; complex processes are not. In the world of things, time’s arrow is always flying.

One twenty-first-century theorist who began to challenge the mainstream block-universe view was Lee Smolin, born in New York in 1955, an expert on quantum gravity and a founder of the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Canada. For much of his career Smolin held conventional views of time (for a physicist) before, as he saw it, recanting. “I no longer believe that time is unreal,” he declared in 2013. “In fact I have swung to the opposite view: Not only is time real, but nothing we know or experience gets closer to the heart of nature than the reality of time.” The rejection of time is itself a conceit. It is a trick that physicists have played on themselves.

“The fact that it is always some moment in our perception, and that we experience that moment as one of a flow of moments, is not an illusion,” Smolin wrote. Timelessness, eternity, the four-dimensional spacetime loaf — these are the illusions. Timeless laws of nature are like perfect equilateral triangles. They exist, undeniably, but only in our minds.

Everything we experience, every thought, impression, intention, is part of a moment. The world is presented to us as a series of moments. We have no choice about this. No choice about which moment we inhabit now, no choice about whether to go forward or back in time. No choice to jump ahead. No choice about the rate of flow of the moments. In this way, time is completely unlike space. One might object by saying that all events also take place in a particular location. But we have a choice about where we move in space. This is not a small distinction; it shapes the whole of our experience.

Determinists, of course, believe that the choice is an illusion. Smolin was willing to treat the persistence of the illusion as a

piece of evidence, not to be dismissed glibly, requiring explanation.

For Smolin, the key to salvaging time turns out to be rethinking the very idea of space. Where does that come from? In a universe empty of matter, would space exist? He argues that time is a fundamental property of nature but space is an emergent property. In other words, it is the same kind of abstraction as “temperature”: apparent, measurable, but actually a consequence of something deeper and invisible. In the case of temperature, the foundation is the microscopic motion of ensembles of molecules. What we feel as temperature is an average of the energy of these moving molecules. So it is with space: “Space, at the quantum-mechanical level, is not fundamental at all but emergent from a deeper order.” (He likewise believes that quantum mechanics itself, with all its puzzles and paradoxes — “cats that are both alive and dead, an infinitude of simultaneously existing universes” — will turn out to be an approximation of a deeper theory.)

For space, the deeper reality is the network of relationships among all the entities that fill it. Things are related to other things; they are connected, and it is the relationships that define space rather than the other way around. This is not a new perspective. It goes back at least to Newton’s great rival Leibniz,⁴⁸ who refused to accept the view of time and space as containers in which everything is situated — an absolute background for the universe. He preferred to treat them as relations between objects: “Space is nothing else, but That Order or Relation; and is nothing at all without Bodies, but the Possibility of placing them.” Empty space

is not space at all, Leibniz would say, nor would time exist in an empty universe, because time is the measure of change. “I hold space to be something merely relative, as time is,” wrote Leibniz. “Instants, considered without the things, are nothing at all.” With the triumph of the Newtonian program, Leibniz’s view almost faded from view.

To appreciate the network-centered, relational view of space, we need look no further than the connected, digital world. The internet, like the telegraph a century before, is commonly said to “annihilate” space. It does this by making neighbors of the most distant nodes in a network that transcends physical dimension. Instead of six degrees of separation we have billions of degrees of connectedness. As Smolin put it:

We live in a world in which technology has trumped the limitations inherent in living in a low-dimensional space.... From a cellphone perspective, we live in a 2.5 billion — dimensional space, in which very nearly all our fellow humans are our nearest neighbors. The Internet, of course has done the same thing. The space separating us has been dissolved by a network of connections.

So maybe it’s easier now for us to see how things really are. This is what Smolin believes: that time is fundamental but space an illusion; “that the real relationships that form the world are a dynamical network”; and that the network itself, along with everything in it, can and must evolve over time.

He presents a program for further study, based on a notion of “preferred global time” that extends throughout the universe and

defines a boundary between past and future. It imagines a family of observers, spread throughout the universe, and a preferred state of rest, against which motion can be measured. Even if “now” need not be the same to different observers, it retains its meaning for the cosmos. These observers, with their persistent sense of a present moment, are a problem to be investigated, rather than set aside.

The universe does what it does. We perceive change, perceive motion, and try to make sense of the teeming, blooming confusion. The hard problem, in other words, is consciousness. We're back where we started, with Wells's Time Traveller,⁴⁹ insisting that the only difference between time and space is that “our consciousness moves along it,” just before Einstein and Minkowski said the same. Physicists have developed a love-hate relationship with the problem of the self. On the one hand it's none of their business — leave it to the (mere) psychologists. On the other hand, trying to extricate the observer — the measurer, the accumulator of information — from the cool description of nature has turned out to be impossible. Our consciousness is not some magical onlooker; it is a part of the universe it tries to contemplate.

The mind is what we experience most immediately and what does the experiencing. It is subject to the arrow of time. It creates memories as it goes. It models the world and continually compares these models with their predecessors. Whatever consciousness will turn out to be, it's not a moving flashlight illuminating successive slices of the four-dimensional space-time continuum. It is a dynamical system, occurring in time, evolving in

time, able to absorb bits of information from the past and process them, and able as well to create anticipation for the future.

Augustine was right all along. The modern philosopher J. R. Lucas,⁵⁰ in his *Treatise on Time and Space*, comes back around: “We cannot say what time is, because we know already, and our saying could never match up to all that we already know.” So was the Buddha (as translated via Borges): “The man of a past moment has lived, but he does not live nor will he live; the man of a future moment will live, but he has not lived nor does he now live; the man of the present moment lives, but he has not lived nor will he live.” We know that the past is gone — it is finished, done, signed, sealed, and delivered. Our access to it is compromised, limited by memories and physical evidence — fossils, paintings in attics, mummies, and old ledgers. We know that eyewitnesses are unreliable and records can be tampered with or misread. The unrecorded past no longer exists. Still, experience persuades us that the past happened and keeps happening. The future is different. The future is yet to come; it is open; not everything can happen but many things can. The world is still under construction.

What is time? Things change, and time is how we keep track.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

1. How do dictionaries define time?
2. How did ancient philosophers define time?
3. Why do dictionaries assume every word has a definition?

4. What is Greenwich Mean Time?
5. What are different time zones?
6. What do clocks have to do with defining time?
7. Why do quantum physicists say time is an illusion?

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL WRITING

1. Gleick makes an effort to define time by consulting dictionaries. Write an essay that takes the form of his search through dictionaries, but instead consult all the people you can find who are willing to try to define time. How many various definitions are you able to gather, and of them how many do you feel are worth considering as satisfying definitions? What is your own definition of time?
2. One question that crops up is whether or not time is real. Review what Gleick has to say about time's reality ([para. 17](#)) and write an essay that explains the problem and then offers a solution. Why could anyone defend the position that time is unreal? How can anyone defend the position that time is real? What does it mean for something to be real? Like Gleick, you may want to consult other people to get their view on this matter.
3. Gleick refers to the Schrödinger equation as being “the screwdriver of modern physics” ([para. 32](#)). Look up Schrödinger online and in physics textbooks. What makes his equation so important that it qualifies as a “screwdriver”? What does his equation predict? In a brief essay, try to explain the significance of Schrödinger's work to someone who is not conversant in physics. Be sure to research Schrödinger's cat. Why is his cat important?
4. The British Definitions of Time Act of 1880 is very detailed and exacting. Explain what the act tries to cover and how successful it has been. Why was it necessary? Was it a political act, or was it simply a decision to make things easier for people? How many different aspects of everyday life did it cover? There were also Time

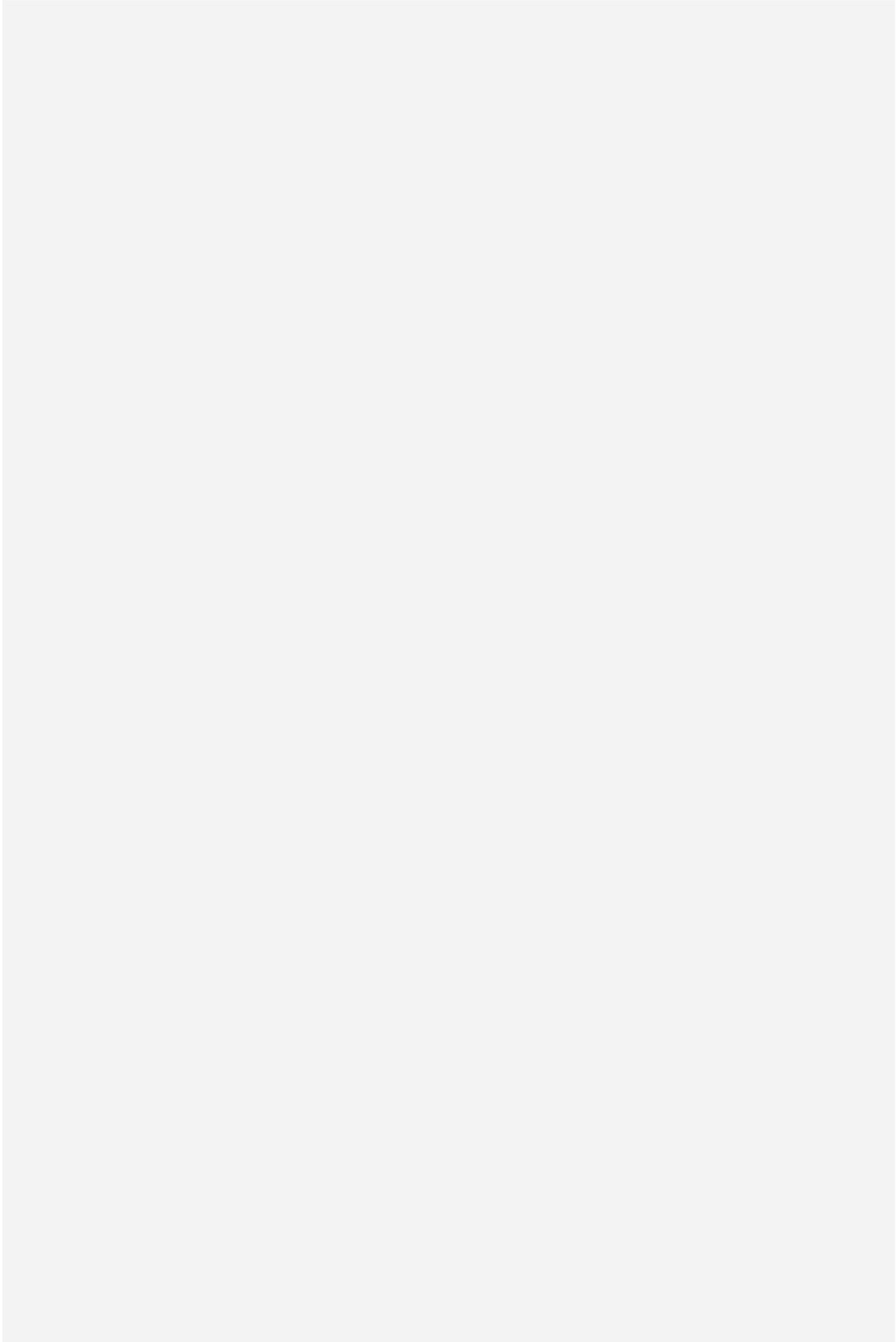
Acts in 1916 and 1972. What did they change about the earlier Time Act?

5. The question of time zones across a nation or land mass is taken for granted today. When were the first time zones instituted, and what nation or nations instigated the program? What are the advantages and disadvantages of having different time zones? How are they defined geographically, and what problems arise because of them? What would be the result of discarding them — as, for instance, China has done?
6. What are the biological realities concerning time? Research the circadian clock, circadian rhythms, and the normal sleep cycle. What do we know about the physiology of time and how it affects us as well as animals? Is the information we have about circadian time helpful in trying to define time? What is the biological clock, and how does it supplement or differ from the circadian clock? How does jet lag affect our circadian rhythms?

CONNECTIONS

1. Michio Kaku, in "[The Theory of the Universe](#)", introduces some of the theories developed by modern scientists, particularly the experts of quantum mechanics. How does his explanation of modern physics help clarify some of the complexities of Gleick's efforts to offer a definition of time? How does assigning time as the fourth dimension of our world (three dimensions of space and one of time) help make us understand it better?
2. In "[Trying Out One's Sword](#)", Midgely argues that we should be able to compare moral and ethical values across cultures. In this explanation of time, Gleick captures differing definitions of time throughout history and in different parts of the world. Do you believe that time, like Midgely argues for morality, can be defined outside of cultural and historic context? What do you think Midgely would say? How might Gleick respond?

3. The problem of definitions, as revealed in Gleick's essay on time, is also apparent in Judith Lorber's essay, "[Paradoxes of Gender](#)". In an essay modeled on Gleick's, write an essay titled "What Is Gender?," and try to define the term, gender, using Gleick's rhetorical techniques. You may use authors in "Part Six: Gender" in order to approximate Gleick's reliance on the testimony of experts. How difficult is defining gender in comparison with defining time?



Reflections on the Nature of Science

Now that you have read the selections in Part Seven, “Science,” consider how these writers have informed your views on science and its place in our world.

1. In what ways are you aware of your own inquiries as scientific?
2. What should be the best relationship between politicians and scientists?
3. Why do you think it is difficult for some people to accept the discoveries of science?
4. What new scientific discoveries do you imagine will most disturb us in the future?
5. Some physicists have said that if an explanation of a physical fact seems reasonable and understandable, then it is false. Which of the scientific explanations in this text seem most unreasonable? What do you make of them?
6. One definition of modern people living in Plato’s cave might be people living without taking advantage of modern science. How could you shape a life without modern science? Would you want to?
7. Which of science’s most recent gifts frightens you most? Is it science that frightens you, or is it the people who know how to use it that frighten you?
8. Which of the authors you have read in this part of the book helped you best understand what science is?
9. After reading the authors in this part of the book, how has your attitude toward science changed? Would you consider a career in science?
10. Modern physicists conceive of a world in which there are more than four dimensions. Why is it difficult for us to imagine such a world? Are you convinced that the universe really has more dimensions than we can perceive?

Notes

Evaluating Ideas: An Introduction To Critical Reading

¹ **aphorism** A short, pithy statement or truth.

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Qualities of the Prince*

1 Francesco Sforza (1401–1466) Became duke of Milan in 1450. He was, like most of Machiavelli's examples, a skilled diplomat and soldier. His court was a model of Renaissance scholarship and achievement.

2 Tuscany Florence is in the region of Italy known as Tuscany.

3 Philopoemon (252?–182 B.C.E.), Prince of the Achaeans Philopoemon, from the city-state of Megalopolis, was a Greek general noted for skillful diplomacy. He led the Achaean League, a group of Greek states, in several important expeditions, notably against Sparta. His cruelty in putting down a Spartan uprising caused him to be reprimanded by his superiors.

4 Cyrus (585?–529? B.C.E.) Cyrus II (the Great), Persian emperor. Cyrus and the other figures featured in this sentence — Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.E.); Achilles, hero of Homer's *Iliad*; Julius Caesar (100?–44 B.C.E.); and Scipio Africanus (236–184/3 B.C.E.), legendary Roman general — are all examples of politicians who were also great military geniuses. Xenophon (431–350? B.C.E.) was one of the earliest Greek historians; he chronicled the lives and military exploits of Cyrus and his son-in-law Darius.

5 Pope Julius II (1443–1513) Giuliano della Rovere, pope from 1503 to 1513. Like many of the popes of the day, Julius II was also a diplomat and a general.

6 present King of France Louis XII (1462–1515). He entered Italy on a successful military campaign in 1494.

7 present King of Spain Ferdinand V (1452–1516). A studied politician; he and Queen Isabella (1451–1504) financed Christopher Columbus's voyage to the Americas in 1492.

8 Cesare Borgia (1476–1507) He was known for his brutality and lack of scruples, not to mention his exceptionally good luck. He was a firm ruler, son of Pope Alexander VI.

9 Romagna Region northeast of Tuscany; includes the towns of Bologna, Ferrara, Ravenna, and Rimini. Borgia united it as his base of power in 1501.

10 Pistoia (also known as Pistoria) A town near Florence, disturbed in 1501 by a civil war that could have been averted by strong repressive measures.

11 The quotation is from the *Aeneid* (2.563–64), the greatest Latin epic poem, written by Virgil (70–19 B.C.E.). Dido, a general, ruled Carthage.

12 Hannibal (247–183 B.C.E.) An amazingly inventive military tactician who led the Carthaginian armies against Rome for more than fifteen years. He crossed the Alps from Gaul (France) in order to surprise Rome. He was noted for use of the ambush and for “inhuman cruelty.”

13 Fabius Maximus (?–203 B.C.E.) Roman general who fought Hannibal. He was jealous of the younger Roman general Scipio.

14 Locrians Inhabitants of Locri, an Italian town settled by the Greeks in c. 680 B.C.E.

15 Chiron A mythical figure, a centaur (half man, half horse). Unlike most centaurs, he was wise and benevolent; he was also a legendary physician.

16 Alexander VI (1431–1503) Roderigo Borgia, pope from 1492 to 1503. He was Cesare Borgia’s father and a corrupt but immensely powerful pope.

17 The Italian original, *si guarda al fine*, has often been mistranslated as “the ends justify the means,” something Machiavelli never wrote. [Translators’ note]

18 A certain prince Probably King Ferdinand V of Spain (1452–1516).

19 Nabis the Spartan Tyrant of Sparta from 207 to 192 B.C.E., routed by Philopoemon and the Achaean League.

20 Canneschi Prominent family in Bologna.

21 Giovanni Bentivoglio (1443–1508) Former tyrant of Bologna. In sequence he was a conspirator against, then a conspirator with, Cesare Borgia.

Thomas Jefferson, *The Declaration of Independence*

¹ **prevent the population of these States** This meant limiting migration to the colonies, thus controlling their growth.

Francis Fukuyama, *Why Did Democracy Spread?*

¹ **Samuel Huntington (1927–2008)** A political scientist at Harvard University.

² **Larry Diamond (b. 1961)** A political sociologist at Stanford University.

³ **Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859)** Visited America in the 1830s and is considered the best commentator on the nature of its early democracy.

⁴ **Georg Hegel (1770–1831)** A German philosopher; **Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900)** was also a German philosopher. Both are important for their contributions to political theory.

⁵ **Prima facie** Latin for “first impression.”

⁶ **Adam Smith (1723–1790)** Wrote *The Wealth of Nations*.

⁷ **Karl Marx (1818–1883)** Wrote *The Communist Manifesto*.

⁸ **Barrington Moore (1913–2005)** A political sociologist and author of *Social Origins of Dictatorships and Democracy*.

⁹ **Bismarckian** Reference to the undemocratic government of Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898), who was the first chancellor of the German Empire.

¹⁰ **Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924)** Leader of Soviet Russia from 1917 to 1924; **Mao Zedong (1893–1976)** ruled communist China from 1949 to 1976.

¹¹ **the Thyssens** were prominent modern German industrialists, and the **Rockefellers**, prominent modern American industrialists. Each name signals massive wealth.

¹² **Nondemocratic anarchosyndicalist** Use the power of labor unions (syndicalism) to force governmental changes.

¹³ **Clientelistic methods** Use the exchange of services or promises to win political support.

14 Oligarchy Government run by a small number of powerful, usually wealthy, people.

15 Juan Peron (1895–1974) Three-time president of Argentina; **Eva Perón (1919–1952)** was Argentina's immensely popular first lady. Peron was ousted by a military coup resulting in a non-democratic crackdown.

José Ortega Y Gasset, *The Greatest Danger, the State*

¹ **mass** The collective population.

² **ad libitum** As one desires.

³ For philosophy to rule, it is not necessary that philosophers be the rulers — as Plato at first wished — nor even for rulers to be philosophers — as was his later, more modest, wish. Both these things are, strictly speaking, most fatal. For philosophy to rule, it is sufficient for it to exist; that is to say, for the philosophers to be philosophers. For nearly a century past, philosophers have been everything but that — politicians, pedagogues, men of letters, and men of science. [Ortega's note]

⁴ **Count Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910)** Author of *War and Peace*.

⁵ Vide *España Invertebrada*, 1912. [Ortega's note]

⁶ We owe to Ranke this simple picture of the great historic change by which for the supremacy of the nobles is substituted the predominance of the bourgeois; but of course its symbolic geometric outlines require no little filling-in in order to be completely true. Gunpowder was known from time immemorial. The invention by which a tube was charged with it was due to someone in Lombardy. Even then it was not efficacious until the invention of the cast cannon-ball. The “nobles” used firearms to a small extent, but they were too dear for them. It was only the bourgeois armies, with their better economic organization, that could employ them on a large scale. It remains, however, literally true that the nobles, represented by the medieval type of army of the Burgundians, were definitely defeated by the new army, not professional but bourgeois, formed by the Swiss. Their primary force lay in the new discipline and the new rationalism of tactics. [Ortega's note]

⁷ **Charlemagne or Charles the Great (742–814)** First of the medieval emperors.

8 Louis XVI (1754–1793) King of France executed during the French Revolution.

9 It would be worthwhile insisting on this point and making clear that the epoch of absolute monarchies in Europe has coincided with very weak States. How is this to be explained? Why, if the State was all-powerful, “absolute,” did it not make itself stronger? One of the causes is that indicated, the incapacity — technical, organizing, bureaucratic — of the aristocracies of blood. But this is not enough. Besides that, it also happened that the absolute State and those aristocracies *did not want to aggrandize the State at the expense of society in general*. Contrary to the common belief, the absolute State instinctively respects society much more than our democratic State, which is more intelligent but has less sense of historic responsibility. [Ortega’s note]

10 coup d’état Seizing the government, usually by military means.

11 “L’Etat, c’est moi” “I am the State,” attributed to Napoleon and Louis XIV.

12 Julius Caesar and Tiberius Claudius Nero Roman emperors and both dictators.

13 Severi The Roman army of Emperor Septimus Severus (193–211).

14 Recall the last words of Septimus Severus to his sons: “Remain united, pay the soldiers, and take no heed of the rest.” [Ortega’s note]

15 John William Ward (1781–1833) British politician and the first Earl of Dudley. He served as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs for one year.

16 Joseph Fouché (1763–1820) Napoleon’s chief of security, essentially a policeman.

Cornel West, *The Deep Democratic Tradition in America*

1 Howard Dean (b. 1948) Former governor of Vermont and former chairperson of the Democratic Party.

2 Bush George W. Bush (b. 1946), forty-third president of the United States.

3 Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) American essayist, poet, and lecturer.

4 John Brown (1800–1859) American abolitionist who led a raid on Harpers Ferry in an attempt to free the slaves.

5 Herman Melville (1819–1891) Author of *Moby-Dick* (1851).

6 Mark Twain (1835–1910) Author of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884).

7 James Baldwin (1924–1987) Poet, playwright, novelist, and essayist, and author of *The Fire Next Time* (1963).

8 Toni Morrison (b. 1931) Nobel Prize–winning American novelist and author of *Beloved* (1987).

9 Tupac Shakur (1971–1996) Hip-hop musician and actor whose work explored themes of racism and the problems of the inner city.

10 Walt Whitman (1819–1892) American poet and author of *Leaves of Grass* (1855).

11 Eugene O’Neill (1888–1953) Nobel Prize–winning American playwright and author of *Long Day’s Journey into Night* (1941–1957).

12 W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) American educator, historian, and author of *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).

13 John Coltrane (1926–1967) American jazz saxophone player who influenced modern jazz.

[14](#) **Lorraine Hansberry (1930–1965)** American playwright and author of *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959).

Benazir Bhutto, *Islam and Democracy*

1 Holy Quran and Sunnah The Quran (or Koran), the holy book of Islam, is Allah's word as revealed to the prophet Muhammad; the Sunnah is a record of the sayings of Muhammad.

2 Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876–1948) Indian politician who struggled since the 1920s to create a separate Muslim state and managed to create Pakistan in 1947.

3 Abdou Filali-Ansary Professor of Islamic studies active in the Muslim Reformist tradition.

4 Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (1924–1988) Dictator of Pakistan from 1979 until his death.

5 King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud (1923–2005) Ruler of Saudi Arabia from 1982 to 2005.

6 Saddam Hussein (1937–2006) Absolute ruler of Iraq from 1979 to 2003.

7 Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (1966–2006) An al-Qaeda terrorist.

8 Pervez Musharraf (b. 1943) A general who took control of the Pakistani government by coup in 1999 and ruled as president until 2008, when he went into self-imposed exile. He has been threatened with arrest if he returns to Pakistan.

9 Hosni Mubarak (b. 1928) President of Egypt (1981–2011).

10 Carl Gershman (b. 1943) President of the National Endowment for Democracy since its founding in 1984.

11 Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962) Social activist and wife of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt; **Wendell Willkie (1892–1944)** Roosevelt's opponent for the presidency in 1940.

Frederick Douglass, From *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*

¹ **ell** A measure about a yard in length.

² **Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816)** Irish dramatist and orator. However, Douglass really refers to a speech by Daniel O’Connell (1775–1847) in favor of Irish Catholic emancipation.

³ **abolitionists** Those who actively opposed slavery.

⁴ **John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892)** New England abolitionist, journalist, and poet. The poem Douglass cites is “The Farewell” (1835).

Sigmund Freud, *The Oedipus Complex*

1 Die Ahnfrau Franz Grillparzer (1791–1872) wrote *Die Ahnfrau* (*The Ancestress*).

2 [*Footnote added 1914:*] None of the findings of psychoanalytic research has provoked such embittered denials, such fierce opposition — or such amusing contortions — on the part of critics as this indication of the childhood impulses towards incest which persist in the unconscious. An attempt has even been made recently to make out, in the face of all experience, that the incest should only be taken as “symbolic.” — Ferenczi (1912) has proposed an ingenious “over-interpretation” of the Oedipus myth, based on a passage in one of Schopenhauer’s letters. — [*Added 1919:*] Later studies have shown that the “Oedipus complex,” which was touched upon for the first time in the above paragraphs in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, throws a light of undreamt-of importance on the history of the human race and the evolution of religion and morality. (See my *Totem and Taboo*, 1912–13.) [Freud’s notes]

3 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) One of Germany’s greatest writers.

4 [*Footnote added 1919:*] The above indications of a psychoanalytic explanation of *Hamlet* have since been amplified by Ernest Jones and defended against the alternative views put forward in the literature of the subject. [*Added 1930:*] Incidentally, I have in the meantime ceased to believe that the author of Shakespeare’s works was the man from Stratford. [*Added 1919:*] Further attempts at an analysis of *Macbeth* will be found in a paper of mine [Freud, 1916d] and in one by Jekels (1917). [Freud’s notes]

5 Solon (638–558 B.C.E.) Greek known as the Lawgiver. His ideas on law continue to influence us today.

6 somatic Having to do with the physical body.

Carl Jung, *The Personal and the Collective Unconscious*

¹ **imago** Idealized image of a person.

² **teleological orientation** Possessing a sense of design; directed toward an end or a purpose.

³ **Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860)** German pessimistic philosopher.

⁴ **Gottesminne** Love of God.

⁵ **Mechtild of Magdeburg (1207–1282)** Thirteenth-century German mystic, writer, and saint.

⁶ **a priori** Based on theory rather than on experiment or evidence.

⁷ **Wotan** Supreme Germanic god; character in Richard Wagner's *Ring* cycle of operas.

⁸ **to pneûma pneî hopou thelei** The wind blows where it wishes (John 3:8).

⁹ Cf. Théodore Flournoy, *Des Indes à la planète Mars: Étude sur un cas de somnambulisme avec glossolalie* (Paris and Geneva, 1900; trans. by D. B. Vermilye as *From India to the Planet Mars*, New York, 1900), and Jung, "Psychology and Pathology of So-called Occult Phenomena," *Coll. Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 81ff. [Jung's note]

Virginia Woolf, *Shakespeare's Sister*

1 Trevelyan, George Macaulay (1876–1962) One of England's great historians. [Woolf's note]

2 even greater "It remains a strange and almost inexplicable fact that in Athena's city, where women were kept in almost Oriental suppression as odalisques or drudges, the stage should yet have produced figures like Clytemnestra and Cassandra, Atossa and Antigone, Phèdre and Medea, and all the other heroines who dominate play after play of the 'misogynist' Euripides. But the paradox of this world where in real life a respectable woman could hardly show her face alone in the street, and yet on the stage a woman equals or surpasses a man, has never been satisfactorily explained. In modern tragedy the same predominance exists. At all events, a very cursory survey of Shakespeare's work (similarly with Webster, though not with Marlowe or Jonson) suffices to reveal how this dominance, this initiative of women, persists from Rosalind to Lady Macbeth. So too in Racine; six of his tragedies bear their heroines' names; and what male characters of his shall we set against Hermione and Andromaque, Bérénice and Roxane, Phèdre and Athalie? So again with Ibsen; what men shall we match with Solveig and Nora, Hedda and Hilda Wangel and Rebecca West?" — F. L. Lucas, *Tragedy*, pp. 114–15. [Woolf's note]

3 John Aubrey (1626–1697) English antiquarian noted for his *Brief Lives*, biographical sketches of famous men.

4 Newnham or Girton Two women's colleges founded at Cambridge in the 1870s. [Woolf's note] Newnham (1871) and Girton (1869) were the first women's colleges at Cambridge University.

5 Elephant and Castle A bus stop in London. The name came from a local pub.

6 Emily Brontë (1818–1848) Wrote *Wuthering Heights*; **Robert Burns (1759–1796)** was a Scots poet; **Jane Austen (1775–1817)** wrote *Pride and Prejudice* and many other novels. All three wrote against very great odds.

7 Edward Fitzgerald (1809–1883) British scholar, poet, and translator who wrote *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*.

8 Currer Bell (1816–1855), George Eliot (1819–1880), and George Sand (1804–1876) Masculine pen names for Charlotte Brontë, Mary Ann Evans, and Amandine-Aurore-Lucille Dudevant, respectively, three major novelists of the nineteenth century.

9 Ce chien est à moi That's my dog.

10 Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880), and John Keats (1795–1821) Important nineteenth-century writers, all men.

11 *A Survey of Contemporary Music*, Cecil Gray, p. 246. [Woolf's note]

12 See *Cassandra* by Florence Nightingale, printed in *The Cause*, by R. Strachey. [Woolf's note]

13 words ... tombstone "Here lies one whose name is writ on water." [Woolf's note]

14 John Donne (1572–1631), Ben Jonson (1572/3–1637), John Milton (1608–1674) Three of the most important seventeenth-century poets.

Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from Birmingham Jail*

¹ This response to a published statement by eight fellow clergymen from Alabama (Bishop C. C. J. Carpenter, Bishop Joseph A. Durick, Rabbi Hilton L. Grafman, Bishop Paul Hardin, Bishop Holan B. Harmon, the Reverend George M. Murray, the Reverend Edward V. Ramage, and the Reverend Earl Stallings) was composed under somewhat constricting circumstances. Begun on the margins of the newspaper in which the statement appeared while I was in jail, the letter was continued on scraps of writing paper supplied by a friendly Negro trusty, and concluded on a pad my attorneys were eventually permitted to leave me. Although the text remains in substance unaltered, I have indulged in the author's prerogative of polishing it for publication. [King's note]

² **village of Tarsus** Birthplace of St. Paul (?–67 C.E.), in Asia Minor, present-day Turkey, close to Syria.

³ **the Macedonian call for aid** The citizens of Philippi, in Macedonia (northern Greece), were among the staunchest Christians. Paul went to their aid frequently; he also had to resolve occasional bitter disputes within the Christian community there (see Phil. 2:2–14).

⁴ **Socrates (470?–399 B.C.E.)** The “tension in the mind” King refers to is created by the question–answer technique known as the Socratic method. By posing questions at the beginning of the paragraph, King shows his willingness to share Socrates' rhetorical techniques. Socrates was imprisoned and killed for his civil disobedience (see [paras. 21](#) and [25](#)). He was the greatest of the Greek philosophers.

⁵ **the millennium** A reference to Revelation 20, according to which the second coming of Christ will be followed by one thousand years of peace, when the devil will be incapacitated. After this will come a final battle between good and evil, followed by the Last Judgment.

⁶ **Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971)** Protestant American philosopher who urged church members to put their beliefs into action against social injustice. He

urged Protestantism to develop and practice a code of social ethics and wrote in *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932) of the point King mentions here.

7 “**justice too long delayed is justice denied**” Chief Justice Earl Warren’s expression in 1954 was adapted from English writer Walter Savage Landor’s phrase “Justice delayed is justice denied.”

8 St. Augustine (354–430) Early bishop of the Christian Church who deeply influenced the spirit of Christianity for many centuries.

9 St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) The greatest of the medieval Christian philosophers and one of the greatest church authorities.

10 Martin Buber (1878–1965) Jewish theologian. *I and Thou* (1923) is his most famous book.

11 Paul Tillich (1886–1965) An important twentieth-century Protestant theologian who held that Christianity was reasonable and effective in modern life. Tillich saw sin as an expression of man’s separation from God, from himself, and from his fellow man. King sees the separation of the races as a further manifestation of man’s sinfulness. Tillich, who was driven out of Germany by the Nazis, stresses the need for activism and the importance of action in determining moral vitality, just as King does.

12 Nebuchadnezzar (c. 630–562 B.C.E.) Chaldean king who twice attacked Jerusalem. He ordered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to worship a golden image. They refused, were cast into a roaring furnace, and were saved by God (see Dan. 1:7–3:30).

13 Hungarian freedom fighters The Hungarians rose in revolt against Soviet rule in 1956. Soviet forces put down the uprising with great force, which shocked the world. Many freedom fighters died, and many others escaped to the West.

14 White Citizen’s Council White Citizen’s Councils organized in southern states in 1954 to fight school desegregation as ordered by the Supreme Court in May 1954. The councils were not as secret or violent as the Klan; they were also ineffective.

15 **Elijah Muhammad's Muslim movement** The Black Muslim movement, which began in the 1920s but flourished in the 1960s under its leader, Elijah Muhammad (1897–1975). Among notable figures who became Black Muslims were the poet Amiri Baraka (1934–2014), the world champion prizefighter Muhammad Ali (1942–2016), and the controversial reformer and religious leader Malcolm X (1925–1965). King saw their rejection of white society (and consequently brotherhood) as a threat.

16 **a frightening racial nightmare** The black uprisings of the 1960s in all major American cities, and the conditions that led to them, were indeed a racial nightmare. King's prophecy was quick to come true.

17 **Zeitgeist** German word for the intellectual, moral, and cultural spirit of the times.

18 **freedom rides** In 1961, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) organized rides of whites and blacks to test segregation in southern buses and bus terminals with interstate passengers. More than 600 federal marshals were needed to protect the riders, most of whom were arrested.

19 **Amos, Old Testament prophet (eighth century B.C.E.); Paul (?–C.E. 67); Martin Luther (1483–1546); John Bunyan (1628–1688); Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865); Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826)** These figures are all noted for religious, moral, or political innovations that changed the world. Amos was a prophet who favored social justice; Paul argued against Roman law; Luther began the Reformation of the Christian Church; Bunyan was imprisoned for preaching the gospel according to his own understanding; Lincoln freed America's slaves; Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence.

20 **written about our struggle** These are all prominent southern writers who expressed their feelings regarding segregation in the South. Some of them, like Smith and Golden, wrote very popular books with a wide influence. Some, like McGill and Smith, were severely rebuked by white southerners.

21 **ekklesia** Greek word for "church," meaning not just the institution but the spirit of the church.

22 Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888–1965) Renowned as one of the twentieth century's major poets, Eliot was born in the United States but in 1927 became a British subject and a member of the Church of England. Many of his poems focused on religious and moral themes. These lines are from Eliot's play *Murder in the Cathedral*, about Saint Thomas à Becket (1118–1170), the archbishop of Canterbury, who was martyred for his opposition to King Henry II.

23 the James Merediths James Meredith (b. 1933) was the first black person to become a student at the University of Mississippi. His attempt to register for classes in 1962 created the first important confrontation between federal and state authorities, when Governor Ross Barnett personally blocked Meredith's entry to the university. Meredith graduated in 1963 and went on to study law at Columbia University.

Frantz Fanon, *On Violence*

1 **Tabula rasa** Clean slate.

2 **Reification** Treating an abstraction as if it were concrete; sociologically, an error in judgment.

3 **Apartheid** The official political separation of races in South Africa. It effectively cut off the possibility of communication between the races.

4 **Status quo** The current situation.

5 **Marxist analysis** The opposition of the bourgeoisie (wealthy class) against the proletariat (working class). See Karl Marx (p. 319).

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Is The Middle Class Doomed?*

¹ **Bennett Harrison, Barry Bluestone** Economist authors of “Wage Inequality Takes a Great U-Turn,” *Challenge*, March/April 1986. **Chris Tilly (b. 1929)** is professor of Urban Planning and Director of the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment at UCLA.

² **Felix Rohatyn (b. 1928)** An investment banker, former ambassador to France.

³ **Fabian Linden (1916–1995)** Economist who invented the consumer confidence index.

⁴ **Jeff Faux (b. 1936)** Founder of the Economic Policy Institute.

⁵ **Richard A. Musgrave (1910–2007)** German American economist, author of *The Theory of Public Finance* (1959).

⁶ **Lenore J. Weitzman** Sociologist and professor at George Mason University.

⁷ **Mimi Lieber (b. 1956)** Celebrity consultant.

⁸ **Sheldon Danziger (b. 1948), Peter Gottschalk** Economists, authors of *America Unequal* (1995).

⁹ **Helots** Ancient Greek serfs.

¹⁰ **David Smith (b. 1945)** British journalist who specializes in economics.

¹¹ **Michael Harrington (1928–1989)** Author of *The Other America* and a Democratic Socialist.

¹² **Spiro T. Agnew (1918–1996)** Richard Nixon’s Vice-President (1969–1973). He resigned in disgrace.

¹³ **Saskia Sassen-Koob (b. 1947)** Dutch-American sociologist noted for her studies of globalism.

[14](#) **Ralph Whitehead** Journalism professor emeritus at University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

[15](#) **Ethel Klein (b. 1952)** Professor of American Politics at Columbia University.

[16](#) **Karl Marx (1818–1883)** Author of *The Communist Manifesto* (p. 321).

Adam Smith, *The Value of Labor*

¹ **Mr. Cantillon** Richard Cantillon (1680–1734), an Irish-French economist who wrote *Essay on the Nature of Trade in General* in 1730. Written in French, the manuscript was circulated widely but not published until 1755. His book is considered one of the first works on political economy.

Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*

1 Prince Klemens von Metternich (1773–1859) Foreign minister of Austria (1809–1848), who had a hand in establishing the peace after the final defeat in 1815 of Napoleon (1769–1821); Metternich was highly influential in the crucial Congress of Vienna (1814–1815).

2 François Pierre Guizot (1787–1874) Conservative French statesman, author, and philosopher. Like Metternich, he was opposed to communism.

3 French Radicals Actually middle-class liberals who wanted a return to a republic in 1848 after the eighteen-year reign of Louis-Philippe (1773–1850), the “citizen king.”

4 By bourgeois is meant the class of modern Capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage labor. By proletarians, the class of modern wage laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor-power in order to live. [Engels’s note]

5 the Cape The Cape of Good Hope, at the southern tip of Africa. This was a main sea route for trade with India and East Asia. Europe profited immensely from the opening up of these new markets in the sixteenth century.

6 the medieval commune Refers to the growth in the eleventh century of towns whose economy was highly regulated by mutual interest and agreement.

7 “third estate” The clergy was the first estate, the aristocracy the second estate, and the bourgeoisie the third estate.

8 religious fervor This and other terms in this sentence contain a compressed historical observation. “Religious fervor” refers to the Middle Ages; “chivalrous enthusiasm” refers to the rise of the secular state and to the military power of knights; “Philistine sentimentalism” refers to the development of popular arts and literature in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. “Philistine” refers to those who were generally uncultured, that is, the general public. “Sentimentalism” is a word for the encouragement of emotional response rather than rational thought.

9 combinations (Trades' Unions) The labor movement was only beginning in 1848. It consisted of trades' unions that started as social clubs but soon began agitating for labor reform. They represented an important step in the growth of socialism in Europe.

10 the ten hours' bill in England This bill (1847) was an important labor reform. It limited the working day for women and children in factories to only ten hours, at a time when it was common for some people to work sixteen hours a day. The bill's passage was a result of political division, not of benevolence on the managers' part.

11 tautology A statement whose two parts say essentially the same thing. The second half of the previous sentence is a tautology.

12 Agrarian Reforms Agrarian reform was a very important issue in America after the Revolution. The Chartists were a radical English group established in 1838; they demanded political and social reforms. They were among the more violent revolutionaries of the day. Agrarian reform, or redistribution of the land, was slow to come, and the issue often sparked violence between social classes.

13 Social-Democrats In France in the 1840s, a group that proposed the ideal of labor reform through the establishment of workshops supplied with government capital.

14 Radicals By 1848, European Radicals, taking their name from the violent revolutionaries of the French Revolution (1789–1799), were a nonviolent group content to wait for change.

15 the insurrection of Cracow in 1846 Cracow was an independent city in 1846. The insurrection was designed to join Cracow with Poland and to further large-scale social reforms.

16 on the eve of a bourgeois revolution Ferdinand Lassalle (1825–1864) developed the German labor movement and was in basic agreement with Marx, who was nevertheless convinced that Lassalle's approach was wrong. The environment in Germany seemed appropriate for revolution, in part because of

its fragmented political structure and in part because no major revolution had yet occurred there.

Andrew Carnegie, *The Gospel of Wealth*

1 Gaius Maecenas (c. 74–8 B.C.E.) Wealthy patron to great Roman authors.

2 Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1771) A spiritual awakening late in life made him believe he could speak with angels and visit heaven and hell. His book *Heaven and Hell* (1758) was widely read in the nineteenth century and is still influential.

3 Law of entail A law designed to restrict inheritance to only the heirs of the family who owns the property.

4 Shylock The moneylender and title character in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

5 Cooper Institute Now Cooper Union, founded in 1858 by Peter Cooper as a free school for the sciences and the arts.

6 Samuel Tilden (1814–1886) He bequeathed \$4 million to found the New York Public Library after he died. His will was contested and only \$3 million was given to found the library.

7 Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) Author of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. Tolstoy lived a spare and simple life in his old age.

8 Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) British philosopher who applied Darwinian theories of evolution to the social sciences.

9 Peter Cooper (1791–1883), Enoch Pratt (1808–1896), Charles Pratt (1830–1891), Leland Stanford (1824–1893) All were prominent millionaires and eventual philanthropists, three of whom founded universities.

F. A. Hayek, *Economic Control and Totalitarianism*

¹ **Stuart Chase (1888–1985)** An American economist and moderate socialist.

² Cf. Lionel Robbins, *The Economic Causes of War* (London: J. Cape, 1939), Appendix. [Hayek's note]

³ The extent of the control over all life that economic control confers is nowhere better illustrated than in the field of foreign exchanges. Nothing would at first seem to affect private life less than a state control of the dealings in foreign exchange, and most people will regard its introduction with complete indifference. Yet the experience of most Continental countries has taught thoughtful people to regard this step as the decisive advance on the path to totalitarianism and the suppression of individual liberty. It is, in fact, the complete delivery of the individual to the tyranny of the state, the final suppression of all means of escape — not merely for the rich but for everybody. Once the individual is no longer free to travel, no longer free to buy foreign books or journals, once all the means of foreign contact can be restricted to those of whom official opinion approves or for whom it is regarded as necessary, the effective control of opinion is much greater than that ever exercised by any of the absolutist governments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. [Hayek's note]

⁴ To justify these strong words, the following conclusions may be quoted at which Colin Clark, one of the best known among the younger economic statisticians and a man of undoubted progressive views and a strictly scientific outlook, has arrived in his *The Conditions of Economic Progress* (London: Macmillan, 1940), pp. 3–4: The “oft-repeated phrases about poverty in the midst of plenty, and the problems of production having already been solved if only we understood the problem of distribution, turn out to be the most untruthful of all modern clichés.... The underutilisation of productive capacity is a question of considerable importance only in the U.S.A., though in certain years also it has been of some importance in Great Britain, Germany and France, but for most of the world it is entirely subsidiary to the more important

fact that, with productive resources fully employed, they can produce so little. The age of plenty will still be a long while in coming.... If preventable unemployment were eliminated throughout the trade cycle, this would mean a distinct improvement in the standard of living of the population of the U.S.A., but from the standpoint of the world as a whole it would only make a small contribution towards the much greater problem of raising the real income of the bulk of the world population to anything like a civilised standard.” [Hayek’s note]

⁵ It is no accident that in the totalitarian countries, be it Russia or Germany or Italy, the question of how to organize the people’s leisure has become a problem of planning. The Germans have even invented for this problem the horrible and self-contradictory name of Freizeitgestaltung (literally: the shaping of the use made of the people’s free time), as if it were still “free time” when it has to be spent in the way ordained by authority. [Hayek’s note]

Robert B. Reich, *Why the Rich Are Getting Richer and the Poor, Poorer*

¹ The reader should note, of course, that lower wages in other areas of the world are of no particular attraction to global capital unless workers there are sufficiently productive to make the labor cost of producing *each unit* lower there than in higher-wage regions. Productivity in many low-wage areas of the world has improved due to the ease with which state-of-the-art factories and equipment can be installed there. [Reich's note]

² John Maxwell Hamilton, "A Bit Player Buys into the Computer Age," *New York Times Business World*, December 3, 1989, p. 14. [Reich's note]

³ Udayan Gupta, "U.S.–Indian Satellite Link Stands to Cut Software Costs," *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 1989, p. B2. [Reich's note]

⁴ *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), p. 416, table 684. [Reich's note]

⁵ Calculations from Current Population Surveys by L. Katz and A. Revenga, "Changes in the Structure of Wages: U.S. and Japan," National Bureau of Economic Research, September 1989. [Reich's note]

⁶ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Wages of Unionized and Non-Unionized Workers," various issues. [Reich's note]

⁷ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Reemployment Increases Among Displaced Workers," *BLS News*, USDL 86–414, October 14, 1986, table 6. [Reich's note]

⁸ *Wall Street Journal*, February 16, 1990, p. A5. [Reich's note]

⁹ Figures from the International Motor Vehicles Program, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1989. [Reich's note]

¹⁰ The growing portion of the American labor force engaged in in-person services, relative to routine production, thus helps explain why the number of

Americans lacking health insurance increased by at least 6 million during the 1980s. [Reich's note]

[11](#) U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Reemployment Increases Among Disabled Workers," October 14, 1986. [Reich's note]

[12](#) Federal Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Statistical Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986, 1987). [Reich's note]

[13](#) See Claudia H. Deutsch, "The Powerful Push for Self-Service," *New York Times*, April 9, 1989, section 3, p. 1. [Reich's note]

[14](#) U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-23, no. 138, tables 2-1, 4-6. See W. Johnson, A. Packer, et al., *Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century* (Indianapolis: Hudson Institute, 1987). [Reich's note]

[15](#) The Census Bureau estimates that by the year 2000, at least 12 million Americans will work in health services — well over 6 percent of the total workforce. [Reich's note]

[16](#) In 1989, the entertainment business summoned to the United States \$5.5 billion in foreign earnings — making it among the nation's largest export industries, just behind aerospace. U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Commission, "Composition of U.S. Exports," various issues. [Reich's note]

Robin Kimmerer, *The Gift of Strawberries*

¹ **Gwich'in man** Northwestern or Alaskan Indigenous native.

² **Lewis Hyde (b. 1945)** Author of *The Gift* (1983); A creative writing professor at Kenyon College and Harvard University.

Dambisa Moyo, “*Economic Growth Matters to Ordinary People*”

¹ Dambisa Moyo, *Edge of Chaos: Why Democracy Is Failing to Deliver Economic Growth — and How to Fix It* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), p. 235.

² **GDP** The gross domestic product is the total value of goods and services of a nation, plus investments, in one year.

³ **Syriza Party** The name Syriza is an acronym for the Coalition of the Radical Left. It is a radical political party in Greece.

⁴ **OECD** The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development is a group of 36 nations cooperating with each other on economic issues.

⁵ **John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946)** One of the twentieth century’s most important economists. He insisted on extensive government spending during the Great Depression in the 1930s.

⁶ **Catalonian independence** Catalan is an area of southwestern Spain whose major city is Barcelona. Since the Spanish civil war in the 1930s it has had an uneasy relationship with the overall Spanish government. It is not independent at this time.

Michel Eyquem De Montaigne, *Of the Education of Children*

¹ **Foix** A castle in Southern France. Montaigne addressed his essay to Countess Diane de la Foix while she was pregnant with her first child.

² **Arcesilaus (315–240 B.C.E.)** Sixth director of Plato's Academy.

³ **Xenophon (430–355 B.C.E.)** His great book *Anabasis* is on the Persian wars.

⁴ **Epicharmus (540–450 B.C.E.)** A Greek poet.

⁵ Ludovico Palvalli and Pompeo Diobono, two famous Milanese dancing masters at the French court.

⁶ Probably a Roman dancer of Montaigne's time.

⁷ **Nero (37–68 C.E.)** One of Rome's most notorious emperors.

⁸ **harquebus** A gun.

⁹ **Lacedaemonians** Spartans, the chief rivals of Athenians.

¹⁰ **Plutarch (A.D. 46?–120)** Author of *Parallel Lives*, biographies of Greek and Roman dignitaries.

¹¹ **Hannibal (247–182 B.C.E.)** was a Carthaginian general who attacked Rome. **Scipio (237–183 B.C.E.)** was the general who defeated him.

¹² **Livy (64 B.C.E.–A.D. 17)** Great Roman historian.

¹³ **Etieane de La Boétie (1530–1563)** Montaigne's closest friend.

¹⁴ A fifteenth-century translator of Aristotle and author of a Greek grammar.
[Translator's note]

¹⁵ **Pallas** Venus was the goddess of love and Pallas was Pallas Athene, the owl-eyed goddess of war.

[16](#) Paris, whose award of the golden apple, the prize of beauty, to Aphrodite instead of Hera or Athene led to the Trojan War. Bradamante and Angelica are two heroines of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. [Translator's note]

Maria Montessori, *The Montessori Method*

¹ **hymenoptera** A class of insects including wasps, bees, and ants.

² **Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778)** Philosopher who wrote the novel *Emile, or On Education*.

³ **Giuseppe Sergi (1841–1936)** A professor of anthropology who worked with - Montessori at the University of Rome.

Diane Ravitch, *The Essentials of a Good Education*

¹ **No Child Left Behind** Federal law (2001) requiring testing of children in reading and math in grades 3–8 and once in high school.

² **Gates Foundation and Rubert Murdoch’s Amplify** Foundations that gave money to support education. Amplify focused on supplying digital technology to schools but failed and was sold in 2015. InBloom shut down in 2014.

³ **fungible** Replaceable or exchangeable.

⁴ **Jim Crow** Laws (1877–1965) in the South that reinforced racial segregation.

Marilynne Robinson, *What Are We Doing Here?*

1 John Milton (1608–1674) Gave a speech to the Houses of Parliament on the subject of book censorship. It is called *Areopagitica* and is available online.

2 Oh tempora, o mores! A quotation from the Roman orator Cicero meaning “Oh, what times! What customs!” It is a complaint.

3 Fabians Nineteenth Century British socialist organization.

4 Etiology The cause or origin of something.

5 Spenglerian Pertaining to Oswald Spengler (1880–1936), a German historian whose *The Decline of the West* (1918 and 1922) argued that all cultures have a limited lifespan and predicted that Western culture was expiring.

6 Inchoate Unformed, immature, undeveloped.

7 Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) French aristocrat whose book about America in 1835 is still a classic study of democracy.

8 Walt Whitman (1819–1892) Author of *Leaves of Grass*, a collection of poems first published in 1855 but revised continually throughout his life. Whitman has been said to have created free verse and as such stands as the leading modern American poet.

9 John Keats (1795–1821) A leading British romantic poet. The lines come from his sonnet, “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer.”

10 Benthamite panopticon Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), philosopher and social reformer, developed utilitarianism, the philosophy that defends the social program that produces the most happiness for the most people. His panopticon was a building in which one person could watch over the activity of everyone confined in it.

11 **Helots** Greek slaves and foot soldiers.

12 **Draconian solutions** Severely harsh results.

Howard Gardner, *A Rounded Version: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*

¹ Jencks, C. (1972). *Inequality*. New York: Basic Books. [Gardner's note]

² veridical Telling the truth.

³ Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books. [Gardner's note]

⁴ Menuhin, Y. (1977). *Unfinished Journey*. New York: Knopf. [Gardner's note]

⁵ Connor, A. (1982). *Voices from Cooperstown*. New York: Collier. (Based on a quotation taken from *The Babe Ruth Story*, Babe Ruth & Bob Considine. New York: Dutton, 1948.) [Gardner's note]

⁶ apraxia A neurological disorder characterized by an inability to execute purposeful movements despite having the desire or physical ability to do so.

⁷ Gallwey, T. (1976). *Inner Tennis*. New York: Random House. [Gardner's note]

⁸ Keller, E. (1983). *A Feeling for the Organism* (p. 104). Salt Lake City: W. H. Freeman. [Gardner's note]

⁹ Soldo, J. (1982). Jovial juvenilia: T. S. Eliot's first magazine. *Biography*, 5, 25–37. [Gardner's note]

¹⁰ Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books. [Gardner's note]

¹¹ Selfe, L. (1977). *Nadia: A Case of Extraordinary Drawing in an Autistic Child*. New York: Academic Press. [Gardner's note]

¹² Lash, J. (1980). *Helen and Teacher: The Story of Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan Macy* (p. 52). New York: Delacorte. [Gardner's note]

¹³ Lash (p. 54). [Gardner's note]

14 **Woolf, V. (1976).** *Moments of Being* (pp. 69–70). Sussex: The University Press. [Gardner's note]

15 **reified** Regarding an abstraction (e.g., intelligence) as if it were a concrete thing.

Martha Nussbaum, *Education for Democracy*

¹ This has been shown with particular clarity by Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen in *India: Development and Participation* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), and in the earlier edition, which has the title *India: Social Development and Economic Opportunity* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). The data come from studies of different Indian states that have adopted different policies, some favoring economic growth without direct support for health and education, some favoring direct government action to support health and education (which the Indian Constitution leaves to the states). The field studies are gathered in Drèze and Sen, editors, *Indian Development: Selected Regional Perspectives* (Delhi, New York, and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). [Nussbaum's note]

² **James Wolfensohn (b. 1933)** Ninth president of the World Bank.

³ See Drèze and Sen, *India: Development and Participation*. [Nussbaum's note]

⁴ Jobs in health and education are under state control according to the Indian - Constitution, so the national government can affect development in these areas only indirectly. [Nussbaum's note]

⁵ Article 21 of the Indian Constitution speaks only of “life and liberty,” but “life” has since been interpreted to mean “life commensurate with human dignity.” The South African Constitution has gone much further, however, in giving constitutional form to basic welfare rights. [Nussbaum's note]

⁶ **Spellings Commission Report** Commission on the Future of Higher Education (2005) under the watch of Margaret Spellings, Secretary of Education.

⁷ **Draconian** severe, painful.

⁸ **Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), John Dewey (1859–1952), Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852), Johann Pestalozzi (1746–1827), Maria**

Montessori (1870–1952) Educational theoreticians from Europe and the United States.

⁹ **Socrates (d. 399 B.C.E.)** Considered the founder of Greek philosophy and a - proponent of argument and discussion as a form of education.

¹⁰ **Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941)** Indian poet, artist, philosopher and educational theorist. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913.

¹¹ Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1917).
[Nussbaum's note]

¹² See Nussbaum, *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), ch. 8, for a detailed account, with references and citations. [Nussbaum's note]

¹³ See Nussbaum, "Violence on the Left: Nandigram and the Communists of West Bengal," *Dissent*, Spring 2008, 27–33. [Nussbaum's note]

¹⁴ Thus, in West Bengal, it was the arts community that earliest and most strongly opposed government policies of kicking rural laborers off their land without skills training or job opportunities; see *ibid.* [Nussbaum's note]

Bell Hooks, *Educating Women: A Feminist Agenda*

¹ **Charlotte Bunch (b. 1943)** Professor at Rutgers University and widely published feminist author.

² **Paulo Freire (d. 1997)** Brazilian educator, author of the influential *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

³ **Grace Lee Boggs (1915–2015) and James Boggs (1953–1993)** Because of limited academic opportunities, Grace Lee took a job in the University of Chicago library. When she met James and married they joined activist organizations and wrote several books together.

⁴ **Hegemony** Control over rivals.

Aristotle, *The Aim of Man*

1 *ad infinitum* Endlessly; to infinity.

2 city-state Athens was an independent nation, a city-state (polis). Greece consisted of a great many independent states, which often leagued together in confederations.

3 incontinent Uncontrolled, in this case by reason.

4 first principles Concepts such as goodness, truth, and justice. Arguments that lead to first principles usually begin with familiar, less abstract evidence.

5 Works and Days, ll. 293–297. [Translator’s note] Hesiod (eighth century B.C.E.) Well-known Greek author. His Works and Days is notable for its portraits of everyday shepherd life and its moralizing fables. His *Theogony* is a description of the creation, widely taken as accurate in his day.

6 An ancient Assyrian king to whom is attributed the saying, “Eat, drink, and be merry: nothing else is worth a snap of the fingers.” [Translator’s note] Sardanapalus (d. 880 B.C.E.) Noted for his slothful and decadent life. When it was certain that he was to die — the walls of his city had been breached by an opposing army — he had his wives, animals, and possessions burned with him in his palace.

7 not all ends are final By ends Aristotle means purposes. Some purposes are final — the most important; some are immediate — the less important. When a corporation contributes funds to public broadcasting, for example, its immediate purpose may be to fund a worthwhile program. Its final purpose may be to benefit from the publicity gained from advertising.

8 man qua man Man as such, without reference to what he may be or do.

9 sentient Knowing, aware, conscious.

10 “practical” Aristotle refers to the actual practices that will define the ethical nature of the individual.

11 “human techniques” Arts or skills; in a sense, technology.

12 induction A process of reasoning based on careful observation and collection of details upon which theories are based. “A kind of habituation” may refer to a combination of intellectual approaches characteristic of an individual.

13 adventitious Unnecessary; superfluous.

14 inscription at Delos Delos is the island that once held the Athenian treasury. It was the birthplace of Apollo, with whom the inscription would be associated.

15 divine dispensation A gift of the gods.

16 Priam King of Troy in Homer’s Iliad. He suffered a terrible reversal of fortune when Troy was defeated by the Greeks.

17 Solon (638–558 B.C.E.) Greek lawgiver and one of Greece’s earliest poets. He was one of the Seven Sages of Athens.

18 I.e., whether we are to call no one happy while he still lives. [Translator’s note]

19 A quotation from Simonides. [Translator’s note] Simonides (556–469 B.C.E.) Greek lyric poet who lived and wrote for a while in Athens. His works survive in a handful of fragments; this quotation is from fragment 5.

20 Cretan and Spartan lawgivers Both Crete and Sparta were noted for their constitutions, based on the laws of Gortyn in Crete. These laws were aristocratic, not democratic as in Athens; they promoted a class system and a rigid code of personal behavior.

21 our public discourses Aristotle may be referring to speeches at which the public is welcome, as opposed to his lectures to students.

22 ataxic limbs Aristotle refers to a nervous disorder of the limbs.

23 concupiscent Sexual; Aristotle corrects himself to refer to the general nature of desire.

Hsün Tzu, *Man's Nature Is Evil*

¹ Reading wen instead of fen. [All notes in this selection are from the editor.]

² Mencius, it will be recalled, stated: “The great man is he who does not lose his child’s-heart” (Mencius IVB, 12). If I understand Hsün Tzu correctly, he is arguing that this “child’s-heart,” i.e., the simplicity and naïveté of the baby, will inevitably be lost by all men simply in the process of growing up, and therefore it cannot be regarded as the source of goodness.

³ Reading kuo instead of yi.

⁴ Omitting the words ti-hsiung, which do not seem to belong here.

⁵ Reading Shun instead of Yü here and in the following sentence to conform to the sentence above.

⁶ Min Tzu-ch’ien and Tseng Tzu were disciples of Confucius famed for their filial conduct. Hsiao-i is identified by commentators as the heir apparent of Kao-tsung—i.e., King Wu-ting—of the Yin dynasty.

⁷ Reading kung instead of chü, wen instead of fu, and adding the words Ch’in-jen at the beginning of the sentence. Ch’i and Lu were of course the main centers of Confucian learning.

⁸ This was apparently an old saying. Cf. Mencius VIB, 2: “Chiao of Ts’ao asked, ‘It is said that all men may become Yaos or Shuns. Is this so?’ Mencius replied, ‘It is.’ ”

⁹ Following the rearrangement of the text suggested by T’ao Hung-ch’ing and Kanaya.

¹⁰ Adding wei-ch’ang before the negative in accordance with the suggestion of Kubo Ai. But the sentence is far from clear.

¹¹ A similar passage is found in Kuan Tzu, sec. 12, though without the anecdotal setting of a conversation between Yao and Shun.

12 This last is of course aimed at the logicians.

13 Reading kung instead of k'u.

W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of White Folk*

¹ Schaden Freude Delight at someone else' failure.

² Assegais Spears or javelins.

³ Stanley Henry Morton Stanley (1841–1904), a journalist who explored Africa and sought the source of the Nile. He also made it possible for King Leopold to claim the Congo. When he found the “lost” missionary David Livingstone, Stanley is famously reported to have said, “Dr. Livingstone, I presume.”

⁴ 4 Glave Unidentified author.

⁵ Harris Unidentified author.

⁶ Sonni Ali (1464–1492) Muslim ruler of the Songhai empire in Africa, which included Timbuktu and Gao. He died crossing the Niger river.

⁷ 7 Gerhart Hauptman (1862–1946) German playwright.

⁸ Boxer times (1899–1901) An anti-colonial uprising in China, the Boxer Rebellion.

⁹ Canaille the masses, the common people.

¹⁰ Croesus (560–546 B.C.E.) King of Lydia said to be immensely wealthy.

¹¹ Franz Ferdinand (1863–1914) Heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he was assassinated in Sarajevo and said to have been the cause of World War I.

¹² Revanche An effort to restore a nation's lost territory.

Mary Midgely, *Trying Out One's Sword*

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) An important modern German philosopher. He declared that God is dead.

Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices*

¹ I am indebted to friends in many universities for their help in forming my views on this subject; and particularly to John Giuliano of UCLA, whose unpublished work on the unity of the virtues I have consulted with profit, and to Rosalind Hursthouse who commented on a draft of the middle period. [Foot's note]

² David Hume (1711–1776), Immanuel Kant (1704–1824), John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), George Edward Moore (1873–1958), William David Ross (1877–1971), and Harold Arthur Pritchard (1871–1947) Moral philosophers who influenced Foot.

³ H. W. von Wright (1916–2003) and Peter Geach (1916–2013) Philosophers with extensive work on ethics.

⁴ H. W. von Wright, *The Varieties of Goodness* (London, 1963). [Foot's note]

⁵ Peter Geach, *The Virtues* (Cambridge, 1977). [Foot's note]

⁶ Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) A Doctor of the Catholic church who championed natural reason as understood by Aristotle. His work in ethics and morality is fundamental in modern Catholic theology. His best known work is *Summa Theologica*, or *Theological Selections*.

⁷ John Hersey (1914–1993) A well known modern novelist, author of *Hiroshima* (1946), which raises ethical issues related to the atomic bombing of Japan.

⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1a2ae Q.56 a.3. [Foot's note]

⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, especially bk. VII. [Foot's note]

¹⁰ von Wright op. cit. chapter VIII. [Foot's note]

¹¹ Aristotle op. cit. 1140 b 22–25. Aquinas op. cit. 1a2ae Q.57 a.4. [Foot's note]

¹² Aristotle op. cit. 1106 b 15 and 1129 a.4 have this implication; but Aquinas is more explicit in op. cit. 1a2ae Q.60 a.2. [Foot's note]

[13](#) Aquinas op. cit. 1a2ae Q.61 a.3. [Foot's note]

[14](#) Thomas Wolsey (1473–1530) Cardinal of the Catholic Church and Lord Chancellor in the government of Henry VIII (1491–1547). He fell out of favor with the king and died in transport to prison. His criticism was of Henry's intemperance, especially in having so many wives.

Michael Gazzaniga, *Toward a Universal Ethics*

¹ Aristotle ... Hobbes Philosophers ranging from ancient Greeks to nineteenth-century thinkers who posited theories of human behavior and also expressed or implied moral theories.

² Steven Pinker (b. 1954) Professor of psychology at Harvard University and a student of the evolutionary nature of the language instinct.

³ Ortega y Gasset ... Gould José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955) was one of Spain's greatest modern philosophers; Ashley Montagu (1905–1999) was a prominent anthropologist; Stephen Jay Gould (1941–2002) was professor of zoology at Harvard University and author of books studying evidence relating to Darwin's evolutionary theories.

⁴ James Q. Wilson (1931–2012) Political scientist and professor of government at UCLA.

⁵ Wilson, J. Q. (1993). *The Moral Sense* (New York: Free Press), p. 26. [Gazzaniga's note]

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xii. [Gazzaniga's note]

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18. [Gazzaniga's note]

⁸ Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) Considered the father of modern sociology.

⁹ William D. Casebeer Former professor of philosophy at the Air Force Academy and current intelligence officer for the U.S. Air Force. His book is *Natural Ethical Facts: Evolution, Connectionism, and Moral Cognition* (2003).

¹⁰ Casebeer, W. D. (2003). "Moral Cognition and Its Neural Constituents," *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 4: 840–847. [Gazzaniga's note]

¹¹ *Ibid.* [Gazzaniga's note]

¹² frontal ... all The frontal lobe of the brain is the large portion of both hemispheres located behind the forehead; the prefrontal cortex is beneath the forehead and is responsible for actions involving moral decisions; the limbic system is responsible for emotional behavior; the sensory system is a group of lobes that parse sight, sound, and so on. Casebeer connects each to the philosopher whose “stories” most clearly relate to those portions of the brain.

¹³ Joshua Greene Professor of psychology at Harvard University and author of *The Moral Brain and How to Use It* (2012).

¹⁴ Marc Hauser (b. 1959) Professor of psychology at Harvard University until 2011, where he focused on evolutionary biology and cognitive neuroscience.

¹⁵ Greene, Joshua (2003). “From Neural ‘Is’ to Moral ‘Ought’: What Are the Moral Implications of Neuroscientific Moral Psychology?,” *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 4: 847–850. [Gazzaniga’s note]

¹⁶ Gallese, V., and A. Goldman (1998). “Mirror Neurons and the Simulation Theory of Mind-Reading,” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 2: 493–501; Goldman, A. (1989). “Interpretation Psychologized,” *Mind and Language* 4: 104–119. [Gazzaniga’s note]

¹⁷ Ibid. [Gazzaniga’s note]

¹⁸ Gordon, R. See www.umsl.edu/~phil/Mind_Seminar/New%20Pages/subject.html. [Gazzaniga’s note]

¹⁹ Batson, C. D., and J. S. Coke (1981). “Empathy: A Source of Altruistic Motivation for Helping,” in *Altruism and Helping Behavior: Social Personality and Developmental Perspectives*, J. P. Rushton and R. M. Sorrentino, eds. (Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum), pp. 167–211. Also, Cialdini, R. B., S. L. Brown, B. P. Lewis, C. Luce, and S. L. Neuberg (1997). “Reinterpreting the Empathy-Altruism Relationship: When One into One Equals Oneness,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 73: 481–494; and Hoffman, M. L. (2000). *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice* (New York: Cambridge University Press). [Gazzaniga’s note]

- [20](#) Adam Smith (1723–1790) Professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow University and author of *Wealth of Nations* (1776).
- [21](#) Hatfield, E., J. T. Caccioppo, and R. L. Rapson (1994). *Emotional Contagion* (New York: Cambridge University Press), p. 17. [Gazzaniga's note]
- [22](#) John T. Lanzetta (1926–1989) Former professor of psychology at Dartmouth College.
- [23](#) Lanzetta, J. T., and B. G. Englis (1989). "Expectations of Cooperation and Competition and Their Effects on Observers' Vicarious Emotional Responses," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 56: 543–554. [Gazzaniga's note]
- [24](#) Simner, M. L. (1971). "Newborn's Response to the Cry of Another Infant," *Developmental Psychology* 5: 136–150. [Gazzaniga's note]
- [25](#) Rizzolatti, G., and L. Craighero (2004). "The Mirror Neuron System," *Annual Reviews in Neuroscience* 27: 169–192. [Gazzaniga's note]
- [26](#) Henri Gastaut (1915–1995) French neurologist and specialist in epilepsy.
- [27](#) Rizzolatti and Craighero "Mirror Neuron System," citing Baldissera, F., P. Cavallari, L. Craighero, and L. Fadiga (2001). "Modulation of Spinal Excitability During Observation of Hand Actions in Humans," *European Journal of Neuroscience* 13: 190–194. [Gazzaniga's note]
- [28](#) Giacomo Rizzolatti (b. 1937) Italian neurophysiologist at the University of Parma.
- [29](#) Robin Allott Author of *Motor Theory of Language* (1987), who describes himself as a "higher education professional."
- [30](#) Allott, R. (1991). "The Motor Theory of Language," in *Studies in Language Origins*, vol. 2, W. von Raffler-Enel, J. Wind, and A. Jonker, eds. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins), pp. 123–157. [Gazzaniga's note]
- [31](#) V. S. Ramachandran (b. 1951) Professor of psychology at the University of California at San Diego. Among his books is *The Emerging Mind* (2003).

³² Ramachandran, V. S. “Mirror Neurons and Imitation Learning as the Driving Force Behind ‘the Great Leap Forward’ in Human Evolution,” Third Edge. See www.edge.org/3rd_culture/ramachandran/ramachandran_p1.html. [Gazzaniga’s note]

Kwame Anthony Appiah, *If You're Happy and You Know It*

¹ Vlach Ancient people from eastern Europe who spoke Latin. Their name means “stranger” and is associated with the Wallachia, an ethnic group living primarily in Romania.

² Robert Nozick (1938–2002) Professor of philosophy at Harvard University and author of *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974).

³ Marquis de Sade (1740–1814) French nobleman and writer. The words sadism and sadist derive from his erotic writings, most of which involve violence and pain. He spent more than thirty years in prison or in an insane asylum. During the French Revolution, he was freed and elected as a delegate to the National Assembly.

⁴ Philip Larkin (1922–1985) The lines Appiah includes in this essay are from Larkin’s poem “Annus Mirabilis” (the miraculous year), from his collection *High Windows* (1974).

Mary Wollstonecraft, *Of the Pernicious Effects Which Arise from the Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society*

¹ **sycophants** Toadies or false flatterers.

² **sophisticates** Ruins or corrupts.

³ **infer** Imply.

⁴ **factitious** False.

⁵ **vulgar** Common.

⁶ **incline the beam** The metaphor is of the balance — the scale that representations of blind justice hold up. Wollstonecraft's point is that in her time soldiers fought to prevent the slightest changes in a balance of power that grew ever more delicate, not in heroic wars with heroic consequences.

⁷ **Fabricius (fl. 282 B.C.E.)** Gaius Fabricius, a Roman general and statesman known for resistance to corruption.

⁸ **from the plough** Roman heroes were humble farmers, not gamblers.

⁹ **shuffle and trick** The upper class spent much of its time gambling: faro is a high-stakes card game. Wollstonecraft is ironic when she says the statesman has “still but to shuffle and trick,” but she connects the “training” of faro with the practice of politics in a deft, sardonic fashion. She is punning on the multiple meanings of *shuffle* — to mix up a deck of cards and to move oneself or one's papers about slowly and aimlessly — and *trick* — to win one turn of a card game and to do a devious deed.

¹⁰ **bowels for** Feelings for; sense of pity.

¹¹ **to bubble the gruff mastiff** To fool even a guard dog.

¹² **Cerberus** The guard dog of Hades, the Greek hell or underworld.

- 13 absurd unit of a man and his wife** In English law man and wife were legally one; the man spoke for both.
- 14 cypher** Zero.
- 15 leave the nursery for the camp** Rousseau's *Émile* complains that women cannot leave a nursery to go to war.
- 16 casuist** One who argues closely, persistently, and sometimes unfairly.
- 17 distaff** Instrument to wind wool in the act of spinning, notoriously a job only "fit for women."
- 18 feculent** Filthy, polluted; related to *feces*.
- 19 Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)** The greatest lexicographer and one of the most respected authors of England's eighteenth century. He was known to Mary Wollstonecraft and to her sister, Eliza, a teacher. The reference is to an item published in his *Rambler*, essay 85.
- 20 sentinels on horseback at Whitehall** This is a reference to the expensive demonstration of showmanship that continues to our day: the changing of the guard at Whitehall.
- 21 repinings** Discontent, fretting.
- 22 sinecures** Jobs with few duties but good pay.
- 23 chronicle small beer!** *Othello* (II.i.158). This means to keep the household accounts.
- 24 accoucheur** Male version of the female midwife.
- 25 "that shape hath none"** The reference is to *Paradise Lost* (II.667) by John Milton (1608–1674); it is an allusion to death.
- 26 milliners and mantua-makers** Dressmakers, usually women (whereas tailors were usually men).

27 **fain** Happily, gladly.

28 **help meet** Helper, helpmate.

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Qualities of the Prince*

1 affects Feelings, emotions, or passions.

2 August Strindberg (1849–1912) Swedish playwright and novelist whose dark portraits of women were influenced by his misogyny (hatred of women).

3 talion law Law that demands that the criminal be given the same punishment as was suffered by the victim — an eye for an eye.

4 Aru Islands Islands in Indonesia whose inhabitants were especially interesting for modern anthropologists.

5 Cult of the Virgin During the medieval period (c. 700–300), the Roman Catholic Church promoted a strong emotional attachment to the Virgin Mary, which resulted in the production of innumerable paintings and sculptures. Horney points out the irony of venerating the mother of God while tormenting human women by burning them at the stake.

6 “The Jew must burn” This is a quote from *Nathan the Wise* by the eighteenth-century German author Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, a humanist and a spokesman for enlightenment and rationality. The expression became a colloquialism; it meant no matter how worthy and well-intentioned his acts, by virtue of being a Jew, a man was guilty. [Translator’s note]

7 autos-da-fé Literally, acts of faith. It was a term used to refer to the hearing at which the Holy Inquisition gave its judgment on a case of heresy, and its most common use is to refer to the burning of heretics at the stake.

8 Paul Julius Möbius (1853–1907) German neurologist and student of the pathological traits of geniuses such as Rousseau, Goethe, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche.

9 J. J. Bachofen (1815–1887) One of the earliest German ethnologists, who proposed, in 1861, that a pattern of matriarchy — in which the female was the

dominant figure in society — had existed in the earliest societies.

[10](#) **Sophocles (496?–406 B.C.E.)** Great Greek tragedian. However, Horney is probably referring to Aeschylus (525–456 B.C.E.), who wrote the *Eumenides*, the play she mentions.

[11](#) **Sigmund Freud (1856–1939)** See page 477.

[12](#) **the I and the Thou** A reference to Martin Buber's book *I and Thou*. Buber (1878–1965), a Jewish theologian and philosopher, is associated with modern existentialism.

Simone De Beauvoir, *If Man and Woman Were Equal*

¹ That some arduous professions are prohibited to them does not contradict this idea: even men are seeking professional training more and more; their physical and intellectual capacities limit their choices; in any case, what is demanded is that no boundaries of sex or caste be drawn. [De Beauvoir's note]

² **Stendhal** Pen name for Marie-Henri Beyle (1783–1842), a French novelist known for his early realism and acute psychological portraits.

³ **androgynous** Without clear sexual markers, partly male partly female.

⁴ I know a little boy of eight who lives with a mother, aunt, and grandmother, all three independent and active, and a grandfather who is half-senile. He has a crushing inferiority complex in relation to the female sex, though his mother tries to combat it. In his lycée he scorns his friends and professors because they are poor males. [De Beauvoir's note]

⁵ **Arthur Rimbaud (1854–1891)** French poet who had a turbid youthful life. He influenced more than a generation of poets after him by his work *Une Saison en Enfer*, (*A Season in Hell*).

⁶ *Philosophical Works*, Volume 6. Marx's italics. [Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, Volume 6. — TRANS.] [De Beauvoir's note]

Judith Lorber, *Paradoxes of Gender*

¹ Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York and London: Routledge.

² Scott, Joan Wallach. 1988. *Gender and the politics of history*. New York: Columbia University Press.

³ Jay, Nancy. 1981. Gender and dichotomy. *Feminist Studies* 7:38–56

⁴ Collins, Patricia Hill. 1990. *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

⁵ Mencher, Joan. 1988. Women's work and poverty: Women's contribution to household maintenance in South India. In Dwyer and Bruce, *A Home Divided Women and Income in the Third World*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

⁶ Palmer, Phyllis. 1989. *Domesticity and dirt: Housewives and domestic servants in the United States, 1920–1945*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

⁷ Chodorow, Nancy. 1978. *The reproduction of mothering*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

⁸ Gilmore, David D. 1990. *Manhood in the making: Cultural concepts of masculinity*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

⁹ Cockburn, Cynthia. 1985. *Machinery of dominance: Women, men and technical know-how*. London: Pluto Press.

¹⁰ Almquist, Elizabeth M. 1987. Labor market gendered inequality in minority groups. *Gender & Society* 1:400–14.

¹¹ Connell, R. W. 1987. *Gender and power: Society, the person, and sexual politics*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

¹² Bernard, Jessie. 1981. *The female world*. New York: Free Press.

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[14](#) Cixous, Hélène, and Catherine Clément. [1975] 1986. *The newly born woman*, translated by Betsy Wing. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

[15](#) Smith, Dorothy. 1990. *The conceptual practices of power: A feminist sociology of knowledge*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

[16](#) Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York and London: Routledge.

[17](#) Davies, Christie. 1982. Sexual taboos and social boundaries. *American Journal of Sociology* 87:1032–63.

[18](#) Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York and London: Routledge.

[19](#) Haraway, Donna. 1990. Investment strategies for the evolving portfolio of primate females. In Jacobus, Keller, and Shuttleworth, *Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science*. New York: Routledge.

Molly Haskell, *Who Has It Better, Men or Women?*

¹ **ALS** Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's disease, a progressive neurodegenerative disease.

² **Tiresias** Mythical Greek character who lived both as a woman and as a man.

³ **Ovid (b. 42 B.C.E.)** Roman poet, author of *Metamorphoses*.

⁴ **Christopher Hitchens (1949–2011)** Religious and literary critic.

⁵ **Augustus Caesar (23 B.C.E.–14 C.E.)** The first emperor of Rome.

⁶ **Brandon Teena (1972–1993)** A transgender man who was raped and murdered in Nebraska. The film *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) was based on this hate crime. John Gregory Dunne (1932–2003) wrote about the crime in his article "The Humboldt Murders" (1997).

⁷ **Aristophanes (b. 450 B.C.E.)** and Euripides (c. 480–c. 406 B.C.E.) Two of the most famous Greek playwrights.

⁸ **Lori Lefkowitz (b. 1956)** Ruderman Professor of Jewish Studies at Northeastern University.

⁹ **Ayatollah Khomeini (1902–1989)** The religious leader of the Iranian Shia people.

¹⁰ **Chaz Bono (b. 1969)** A transgender man, child of Sonny and Cher Bono. He is an activist, writer, and actor.

¹¹ **Jan Morris (b. 1926)** A writer and memoirist, born James Humphrey Morris. She was married and had five children. She began a sex change in 1964 and completed it in 1972. She and her wife have remained together.

¹² **Renée Richards (b. 1934)** An ophthalmologist who played professional tennis for a while. She had sex reassignment in 1975. In 1976 she applied to

play as a woman in the U.S. Open.

13 Jennifer Finney Boylan (b. 1958) A transgender activist teaching at Barnard College.

14 Michael Bailey (b. 1957) Teaches at Northwestern University, author of *The Man Who Would Be Queen* (2003).

15 Ray Blanchard (b. 1945) A psychiatrist at the University of Toronto and an expert on transsexualism.

16 *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) A novel set during World War I by Ernest Hemingway.

17 Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961) and **Elizabeth Hadley Richardson (1891–1979)** were married from 1921 to 1927 and lived in Paris.

18 F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896–1940) Jazz Age author of *The Great Gatsby* (1925). Like Hemingway, he was in Paris after World War I.

Catherine A. MacKinnon, *Sexual Harassment: Its First Decade in Court* (Chapter 9 from *Feminism Unmodified*)

¹ *Rabidue v. Osceola Refining*, 584 F. Supp. 419, 427 n. 29 (E.D. Mich. 1984). [MacKinnon's note]

² *Scott v. Sears & Roebuck*, 605 F. Supp. 1047, 1051, 1055 (N.D. Ill. 1985). [MacKinnon's note]

³ *Coley v. Consolidated Rail*, 561 F. Supp. 647, 648 (1982). [MacKinnon's note]

⁴ **quid pro quo** This for that; in this context, something given in return for sex.

⁵ *Gan v. Kepro Circuit Systems*, 28 FEP Cases 639, 641 (E.D. Mo. 1982). See also *Reichman v. Bureau of Affirmative Action*, 536 F. Supp. 1149, 1177 (M.D. Penn. 1982). [MacKinnon's note]

⁶ *Morgan v. Hertz Corp.*, 542 F. Supp. 123, 128 (W.D. Term. 1981). [MacKinnon's note]

⁷ *Pryor v. U.S. Gypsum Co.*, 585 F. Supp. 311, 316 n. 3 (W.D. Mo. 1984). [MacKinnon's note]

⁸ **EEOC** Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

⁹ **fungible** Possible substitute (one woman victim as a substitute for any other woman victim).

¹⁰ *Rabidue v. Osceola Refining*, 584 F. Supp. 423 (E.D. Mich. 1984). [MacKinnon's note]

¹¹ *Cobb v. Dufresne-Henry*, 603 F. Supp. 1048, 1050 (D. Vt. 1985). [MacKinnon's note]

¹² *McNabb v. Cub Foods*, 352 N.W. 2d 378, 381 (Minn. 1984). [MacKinnon's note]

[13](#) *Morgan v. Hertz Corp.*, 27 FEP Cases at 994. [MacKinnon's note]

[14](#) *Rabidue v. Osceola Refining*, 584 F. Supp. 419, 435 (E.D. Mich. 1984).
[MacKinnon's note]

Judith Butler, From *Undoing Gender*

1 Michel Foucault (1926–1984) Important French historian of ideas.

2 John Money (1921–2006) Controversial psychologist and sex researcher; **Anne Fausto-Sterling (b. 1944)**, author of *The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough* (2000); Suzanne Kessler (b. 1946), author of *Lessons from the Intersexed* (2000). All three are important experts in gender studies.

3 Kate Millett (b. 1934) Important feminist and author of *Sexual Politics* (1990).

4 Natalie Angier (b. 1958) A science correspondent for the *New York Times* and author of *Natural Obsessions* (1988), a study of cancer research.

5 gender dimorphism Theory that the only genders are male and female, based on the male and female bodies.

6 Riki Wilchins (b. 1952) An activist who focuses on gender norms but who is best known for bringing transgender people into public acceptance.

7 Kate Bornstein (b. 1948) A transsexual and author of *Gender Outlaw* (1994). **Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986)** was a celebrated French writer and philosopher and author of *The Second Sex* (1953).

8 FTM Female-to-male surgical transformation.

9 dramaturgs Those who supplement the dramatic production of a play through research.

10 ablated Amputated; making a portion of the body nonfunctional.

Francis Bacon, *The Four Idols*

1-idols By this term Bacon means phantoms or illusions. The Greek philosopher Democritus spoke of *eidola*, tiny representations of things that impressed themselves on the mind (see note 21).

2-instauration Institution.

3-induction Bacon championed induction as the method by which new knowledge is developed. As he saw it, induction involved a patient gathering and categorizing facts in the hope that a large number of them would point to the truth. As a process of gathering evidence from which inferences are drawn, induction is contrasted with Aristotle's method, *deduction*, according to which a theory is established and the truth deduced. Deduction places the stress on the authority of the expert; induction places the stress on the facts themselves.

4-sophisms Apparently intelligent statements that are wrong; false wisdom.

5-refracts Deflects, bends back, alters.

6-perturbation Uncertainty, disturbance. In astronomy, the motion caused by the gravity of nearby planets.

7-Heraclitus (535?–475? B.C.E.) Greek philosopher who believed that there was no reality except in change; all else was illusion. He also believed that fire was the basis of all the world and that everything we see is a transformation of it.

8-vulgar Common people.

9-wont Accustomed.

10-laws of demonstration Bacon may be referring to Aristotle's logical system of syllogism and deduction.

11-received systems Official or authorized views of scientific truth.

12 **parallels and conjugates and relatives** A reference to the habit of assuming that phenomena are regular and ordered, consisting of squares, triangles, circles, and other regular shapes.

13 **ratio of density** The false assumption that the relationship of mass or weight to volume was ten to one. This is another example of Bacon's complaint, establishing a convenient regular "relative," or relationship.

14 **tried as in the fire** Trial by fire is a figure of speech representing thorough, rigorous testing even to the point of risking what is tested. An axiom is a statement of apparent truth that has not yet been put to the test of examination and investigation.

15 **infinite divisibility of lines** This gave rise to the paradox of Zeno, the Greek philosopher of the fifth century B.C.E. who showed that it was impossible to get from one point to another because one had to pass the midpoint of the line determined by the two original points, and then the midpoint of the remaining distance, and then of that remaining distance, down to an infinite number of points. By using accepted truths to "prove" an absurdity about motion, Zeno actually hoped to prove that motion itself did not exist. This is the "subtlety," or confusion, Bacon says is produced by the "inability of thought to stop."

16 **discovery of causes** Knowledge of the world was based on four causes: efficient (who made it?), material (what is it made of?), formal (what is its shape?), and final (what is its purpose?). The scholastics concentrated their thinking on the first and last, whereas the "middle causes," related to matter and shape, were the proper subject matter of science because they alone yielded to observation. (See para. 34.)

17 **subaltern** Lower in status.

18 **will and affections** Human free will and emotional needs and responses.

19 **spirits** The soul or animating force.

20 **opposite** Appropriate; well related.

21 **Democritus (460?–370? B.C.E.)** Greek philosopher who thought the world was composed of atoms. Bacon felt such “dissection” to be useless because it was impractical. Yet Democritus’s concept of the *eidola*, the mind’s impressions of things, may have contributed to Bacon’s idea of “the idol.”

22 **human spirit** Human nature.

23 **Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.)** Greek philosopher whose *Organon* (system of logic) dominated the thought of Bacon’s time. Bacon sought to overthrow Aristotle’s hold on science and thought.

24 **natural philosophy** The scientific study of nature in general — biology, zoology, geology, and so on.

25 **chemists** Alchemists had developed a “fantastic philosophy” from their experimental attempts to transmute lead into gold.

26 **William Gilbert (1544–1603)** English scientist who studied magnetism and codified many laws related to magnetic fields. He was particularly ridiculed by Bacon for being too narrow in his researches.

27 **humors** Used in a medical sense to mean a distortion caused by imbalance.

28 **abjured** Renounced, sworn off, repudiated.

29 **Leucippus (fifth century B.C.E.)** Greek philosopher; teacher of Democritus and inventor of the atomistic theory. His works survive only in fragments.

30 **notions and axioms** Conceptions and definitive statements of truth.

31 **idle theories** These are things that cannot be observed and thus do not exist. Fortune is fate; the Prime Mover is God or some “first” force; and the notion that planets orbited the sun was considered as “fantastic” as these others or as the idea that everything was made up of fire and its many permutations.

32 **earth bad** Chalk and mud were useful in manufacture; hence they were terms of approval. *Earth* is used here in the sense we use *dirt*, as in “digging in

the dirt.”

33 **perverted rules of demonstration** Another complaint against Aristotle’s logic as misapplied in Bacon’s day.

34 **wits** Intelligence, powers of reasoning.

35 **confutations** Specific counterarguments. Bacon means that he cannot offer particular arguments against each scientific sect; thus he offers a general warning.

36 **rational school of philosophers** Platonists who felt that human reason alone could discover the truth and that experiment was unnecessary. Their observation of experience produced only a “variety of common instances” from which they reasoned.

37 **another class of philosophers** William Gilbert (1544–1603) experimented tirelessly with magnetism, from which he derived numerous odd theories. Though Gilbert was a true scientist, Bacon thought of him as limited and on the wrong track.

38 **a third class** Pythagoras (c. 580–500 B.C.E.) was a Greek philosopher who experimented rigorously with mathematics and a tuned string. He is said to have developed the musical scale. His theory of reincarnation, or the transmigration of souls, was somehow based on his travels in India and his work with scales. The superstitious belief in the movement of souls is what Bacon complains of.

39 **genii** Oriental demons or spirits; a slap at Pythagoras, who traveled in the Orient.

40 **tumid** Overblown, swollen.

41 **Plato and his school** Plato’s religious bent was further developed by Plotinus (205–270 C.E.) in his *Enneads*. Although Plotinus was not a Christian, his Neo-Platonism was welcomed as a philosophy compatible with Christianity.

Charles Darwin, *Natural Selection*

1plastic Capable of being shaped and changed.

2species called polymorphic Species that have more than one form over the course of their lives, such as butterflies.

3Continent European continent; the contiguous landmass of Europe, which excludes the British Isles.

4Andrew Jackson Downing (1815–1852) American horticulturist and specialist in fruit and fruit trees.

5curculio A weevil.

6laws of correlation In certain plants and animals, one condition relates to another, as in the case of blue-eyed white cats, which are often deaf; the reasons are not clear but have to do with genes and their locations.

7fanciers Amateurs who raise and race pigeons.

8brutal cock fighter Cockfights were a popular spectator sport in England, especially for gamblers, but many people considered them a horrible brutality.

9mandibles Jaws.

10polygamous animals Animals that typically have more than one mate.

11Guiana Formerly British Guiana, now Guyana, on the northeast coast of South America.

12Sir Robert Heron (1765–1854) English politician who maintained a menagerie of animals.

13bantams Cocks bred for fighting.

14Charles George William St. John (1809–1856) English naturalist whose book *Wild Sports and Natural History of the Highlands* was published in 1846.

15**Mr. Pierce** Unidentified.

16**stipules** Spines at the base of a leaf.

17**stamens and pistils** Sexual organs of plants. The male and female organs appear together in the same flower.

18**anthers** That part of the stamen that contains pollen.

19**stigmas** Where the plant's pollen develops.

20**proboscis** Snout.

21**corollas** Inner set of floral petals.

22**humble-bees** Bumblebees.

23**Sir Charles Lyell's noble views** Lyell (1797–1875) was an English geologist whose landmark work, *Principles of Geology* (1830–1833), Darwin read while on the *Beagle*. The book inspired Darwin, and the two scientists became friends. Lyell was shown portions of *On the Origin of Species* while Darwin was writing it.

24**diluvial** Pertaining to a flood. Darwin means that geological changes, such as those that caused the Grand Canyon, were no longer thought of as occurring instantly by flood (or other catastrophes) but were considered to have developed over a long period of time, as he imagines happened in the evolution of the species.

Rachel Carson, *The Obligation to Endure*

[1](#)**Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965)** An Alsatian medical doctor and philosopher whose humanitarian work has continued after his death.

[2](#)**DDT** Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, a widely used pesticide that stays in the earth for generations and that shows up in living organisms.

[3](#)**Charles Elton (1900–1991)** Established the Bureau of Animal Population in 1932 at Oxford University to study the flow of populations throughout the world.

[4](#)**Paul Shepard (1925–1996)** An American ecologist and author of *The Subversive Science: Essays Toward an Ecology of Man* (1969).

[5](#)**Neely Turner (1901–1989)** Connecticut's state entomologist and author of several studies in entomology and insect control.

Michio Kaku, *The Theory of the Universe?*

1 **Albert Einstein (1879–1955)** German-born physicist whose theory of relativity helped in developing nuclear power.

2 **Isaac Newton (1642–1726)** English mathematician and scientist who invented calculus and described the mathematical nature of gravity. His laws of mechanics are still accurate.

3 **Holy Grail** The dish or cup from which Christ is supposed to have drunk at the last supper. Finding it was one of the hopes of the early crusaders. Metaphorically, it is that which everyone hopes to discover.

4 **Werner Heisenberg (1901–1976) and Wolfgang Pauli (1900–1958)** German and Austrian physicists who were pioneers of quantum physics.

5 **Niels Bohr (1885–1962)** Danish Nobel Prize winner (1922) in physics. He was involved in developing quantum theory.

6 **John Schwarz (b. 1941), Michael Boris Green (b. 1946), and Yoichiro Nambu (1921–2015)** Physicists who are pioneers in string theory.

7 **James Clerk Maxwell (1831–1879)** Scottish mathematician and physicist who saw that magnetism, electricity, and light were manifestations of the same phenomenon.

8 **Edward Witten (b. 1951)** American physicist working at the Princeton Institute of Advanced Studies. He studies the mathematics of string theory and quantum physics.

9 **Ptolemy (c. 100–c. 170)** Greco–Egyptian mathematician.

10 **Planck energy** Unit of energy established by German mathematical physicist Max Planck (1858–1947).

11 **Sheldon Glashow (b. 1932)** Physicist who taught at Harvard University, now Professor Emeritus.

12 **SSC** Superconducting Super Collider, a huge magnetic ring that was to have been built near Dallas, Texas, but that was discontinued for lack of funding. It was designed to find more of the basic particles of matter. CERN in Geneva was built instead and has already been of great use to particle physicists.

Ruth Moore, *Evolution Revised: A New Time and a New Way*

1 **Sterkfontein caves** Site in South Africa that has yielded many early fossils.

2 **Eugène Dubois (1858–1940)** Dutch paleoanthropologist. He was the first person to search for early hominid remains. He discovered Java Man in 1891 in Sumatra.

3 **Peking Man** Fossil remains found in the late 1920s near Beijing, China.

4 **Franz Weidenreich (1873–1948)** Authenticated the Peking Man and considered him an ancestor of the Chinese.

5 **Wilfred Edward Le Gros Clark (1895–1971)** A British anatomist and paleoanthropologist who made important contributions to evolution.

6 **Sherwood Washburn (1911–2000)** University Professor at the University of California–Berkeley. He was author of *Ape into Man: A Study of Human Evolution* (1973).

7 The older, more primitive forms soon were replaced, except where they were especially protected, or retreated to a nocturnal life. The safety of the island Madagascar, for example, saved the lemurs. The tarsiers, the lorises, and the galagos found refuge in the night. [Moore's note]

8 **Johanna “Tilly” Edinger (1897–1967)** A paleoneurologist at Harvard University and author of *The Evolution of the Horse Brain* (1948).

James Gleick, *What Is Time?*

[1](#)**Daniel Boorstin (1914–2004)** Professor of American history at the University of Chicago.

[2](#)**Vladimir Nabokov (1899–1977)** A Russian novelist who lived in America and taught at Cornell University. He is the author of *Lolita* (1955).

[3](#)**Richard Feynman (1918–1988)** A Nobel Prize–winning physicist working in quantum mechanics.

[4](#)**Martin Heidegger (1889–1976)** German philosopher and author of *Being and Time* (1927).

[5](#)*Die Zeit ist nicht.* But he adds, *Es gibt Zeit.* Time is given. [Gleick’s note]

[6](#)**Robert Cawdrey (1538–1604)** A clergyman, author of *A Table Alphabetical*, the first single-language English dictionary.

[7](#)**Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)** English author and compiler of the first major English dictionary (1755).

[8](#) Beth Gleick, *Time Is When* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1960). The present author’s mother. [Gleick’s note]

[9](#)**OED** The Oxford English Dictionary (1884–1928; 2nd ed., 1989), the most complete dictionary of the language.

[10](#) “Time!”

[11](#) “By a curious caprice,” wrote the astronomer Charles Nordmann [12](#) in 1924, “the French language, different from others, designates by a single word, the word *temps*, two very different things: the time which goes by and the weather, or state of the atmosphere. This is one of the peculiarities which give to our language its hermetic elegance, its concentrated sobriety, its elliptic charm.” [Gleick’s note]

[12](#)**Charles Nordmann (1881–1940)** A French astronomer.

¹³Even this attempt at definition proved tricky. A test case came on August 19, 1898, at 8:15 p.m. (Greenwich mean time), when a man named Gordon was nicked by the police in Bristol for riding his bicycle without a lamp. The local law clearly stated that every person riding a bicycle (which fell under the definition of “carriage”) shall carry a lamp, so lighted as to afford adequate means of signaling the approach of the bicycle, during the period between one hour after sunset and one hour before sunrise. On the evening in question, sunset in Greenwich had occurred at 7:13 p.m., so Gordon was caught riding lampless a full hour and two minutes after sunset.

This did not sit well with the accused man, because the sun set ten minutes later in Bristol than in Greenwich: 7:23, not 7:13. Nonetheless, the justices of the city of Bristol, relying on the Statutes (Definition of Time) Act, found him guilty. After all, they reasoned, everyone would benefit by having “a readily ascertained time of lighting up.”

With the help of his solicitors, Darley & Cumberland, poor Gordon appealed. The question before the Court of Appeals was described as “an astronomical one.” The appellate court saw it his way. They ruled that sunset is not a “period of time” but a physical fact. Justice Channell was insistent: “According to the decision of the Justices, as it stands, a man on an unlighted bicycle may be looking at the sun in the heavens, and yet be liable to be convicted of the offence of not having his lamp lighted an hour after sunset.” [Gleick’s note]

¹⁴**St. Augustine (354–430 C.E.)** An African bishop and author of *Confessions of St. Augustine* and *City of God*.

¹⁵ “If you stop, in dealing with such words, with their definition, thinking that to be an intellectual finality, where are you? Stupidly staring at a pretentious sham! ‘Deus est Ens, a se, extra et supra omne genus, necessarium, unum, infinite perfectum, simplex, immutabile, immensum, aeternum, intelligens,¹⁶ etc. — wherein is such a definition really instructive? It means less than nothing, in its pompous robe of adjectives.” — William James [Gleick’s note]

¹⁶**Deus est** God is alone, above every other, necessarily the one God, infinitely perfect, simple, immutable, immense, eternal, intelligent.

[17](#) **Robert Hooke (1635–1703)** An English scientist and architect.

[18](#) Hooke proceeded to dig himself into a hole. “I say, we shall find a necessity of supposing some other Organ to apprehend the Impression that is made by Time.” What organ? “That which we generally call Memory, which Memory I suppose to be as much an Organ as the Eye, Ear or Nose.” Where is this organ, then? “Somewhere near the Place where the Nerves from the other Senses meet.” [Gleick’s note]

[19](#) Lee Smolin [20](#) tries to escape the circularity in *Time Reborn* by redefining “clock”: “For our purposes, a clock is any device that reads out a sequence of increasing numbers.” Then again, a person counting to one hundred is not a clock. [Gleick’s note]

[20](#) **Lee Smolin (b. 1955)** Author of *The Trouble with Physics* (2006) and adjunct professor of physics at Waterloo University.

[21](#) **Francis Bacon (1561–1626)** One of the earliest English scientists (p. 722).

[22](#) **Isaac Newton (1643–1727)** An English scientist, author of *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* (1687).

[23](#) **Galileo Galilei (1564–1642)** An Italian astronomer who confirmed that the earth went around the sun.

[24](#) **Sean Carroll (b. 1966)** A research physicist at the California Institute of Technology.

[25](#) **John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart (1866–1925)** A Scottish philosopher. His book *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic* (1896) argues that time does not exist.

[26](#) McTaggart’s name bears explaining. He was christened (by his parents, the Ellises of Wiltshire) John McTaggart Ellis, after his father’s uncle, Sir John McTaggart, a childless Scottish baronet. Sir John then bequeathed a considerable fortune to the Ellises on the condition that they take his surname. In the case of young John, this led to a redundancy. The double dose of “McTaggart” never seems to have bothered him, and he, not the baronet, is the McTaggart most remembered today. [Gleick’s note]

[27](#) **Norbert Wiener (1894–1964)** An American mathematician and originator of cybernetics.

[28](#) **Queen Anne (1665–1714)** Queen of England from 1702 to 1707.

[29](#) **Syllogism** A term in logic whose shape is similar to the four sentences presented here. Simplified, it would follow this form: if A is equal to B; and B is equal to C; then A is equal to C. The example shown is not a syllogism, it just looks like one.

[30](#) **Albert Einstein (1879–1955)** A theoretical physicist who provided the equations that made the nuclear age possible.

[31](#) **Freeman Dyson (b. 1923)** A British theoretical physicist known for his work in quantum mechanics and nuclear science.

[32](#) **Pierre-Simon Laplace (1749–1827)** One of the greatest French mathematicians, author of *Celestial Mechanics* (1799).

[33](#) **Tom Stoppard (b. 1937)** British playwright whose work often depends on modern scientific theories and whose dramas sometimes play with time.

[34](#) **William James (1842–1910)** An American psychologist, author of *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902).

[35](#) **Erwin Schrödinger (1887–1961)** An Austrian physicist whose equation was an early step in developing quantum mechanics by establishing the uncertainty of physical events whose “reality” depends on observation.

[36](#) Where did this come from, this idea of a “Copenhagen interpretation”? First, “Copenhagen” is cool kids’ shorthand for Niels Bohr.[37](#) For several decades, Copenhagen was to quantum theory what the Vatican is to Catholicism. As for “interpretation,” it seems to have started out in German, only the word was *Geist*, as in *Kopenhagener Geist der Quantentheorie* (Werner Heisenberg, 1930). [Gleick’s note]

[37](#) **Niels Bohr (1885–1962)** A Danish physicist who contributed important work to make nuclear fission possible.

38 Christopher Fuchs A professor of physics at the University of Massachusetts Boston, author of *Coming of Age with Quantum Information* (2011).

39 MWI The Many Worlds Interpretation is a result of quantum theorizing, which implies that it is possible that there are many simultaneous universes.

40 Hugh Everett (1930–1982) Got his degree in physics from Princeton and proposed the earliest principles of the Multiple Worlds Interpretation, suggesting the possibility of parallel worlds and that everything that could have happened in the past has happened in one world or another.

41 Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986) An Argentinian author of fantastic stories that are informed by modern science.

42 Philip Ball (b. 1962) A British science writer and editor of *Nature*.

43 Brian Greene (b. 1963) A professor of physics and mathematics at Columbia University. He is author of *The Hidden Reality: Parallel Universe and the Deep Laws of the Cosmos* (2011).

44 Cartesian graphs Plot an x-axis, horizontal, and a y-axis, vertical. Where they intersect is called the origin.

45 Minkowski spacetime The combination of the three dimensions of space (x, y, z) with time, to make the world four-dimensional.

46 William Faulkner (1897–1962) American Nobel Prize winner for literature.

47 “That there is a place for the present moment in physics becomes obvious when I take my experience of it as the reality it clearly is to me and recognize that space-time is an abstraction that I construct to organize such experiences,” says David Mermin. [Gleick’s note]

48 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) A German mathematician who invented differential and integral calculus independent of Isaac Newton.

[49](#) **Wells's Time Traveller** A character in H. G. Wells's (1866–1946) science fiction novel *The Time Machine* (1895).

[50](#) **J. R. Lucas (b. 1929)** A retired professor of philosophy at Oxford University. He is author of *A Treatise on Time and Space* (1976).

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