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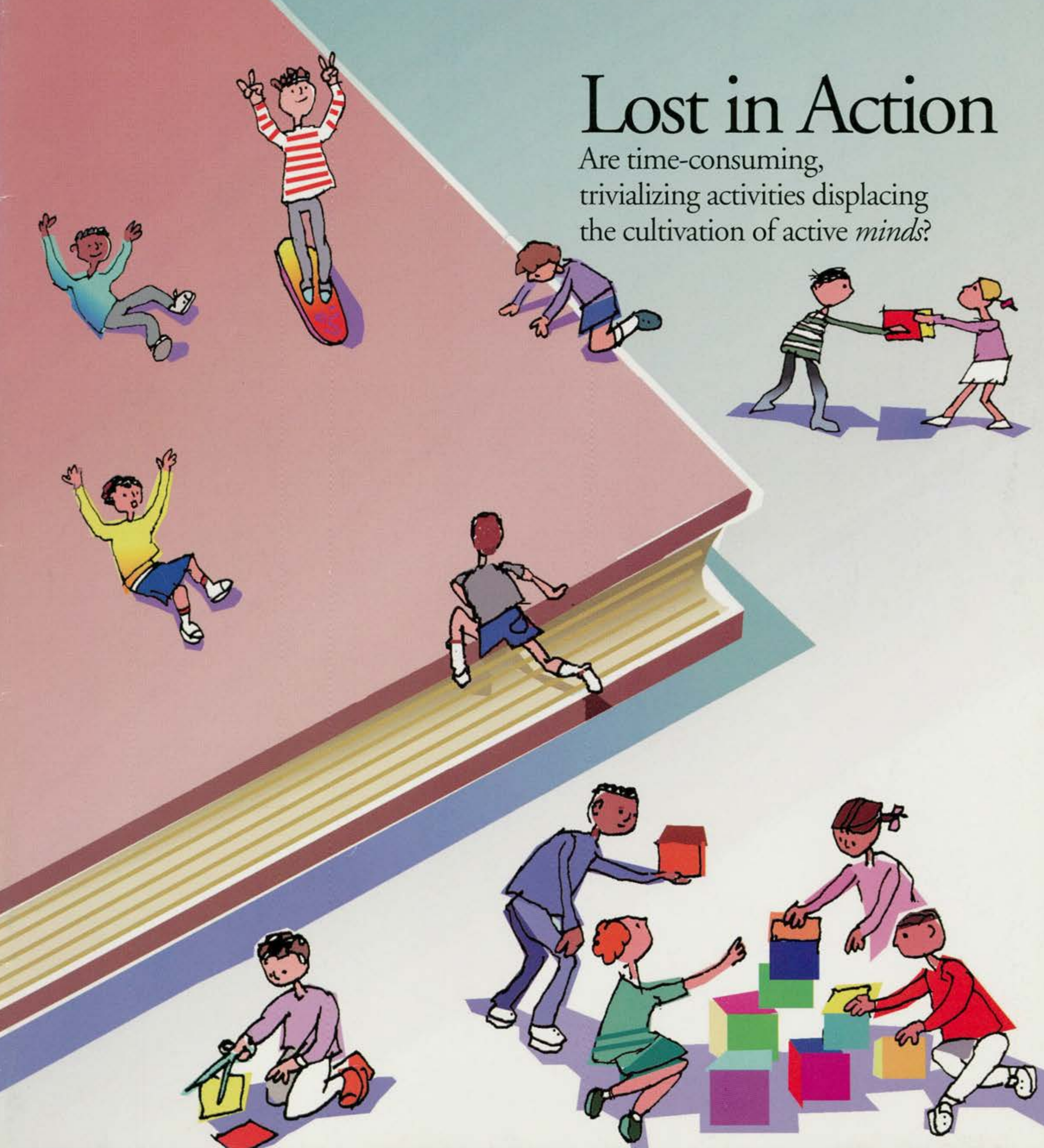

Lost in Action

Are time-consuming, trivializing activities displacing the cultivation of active *minds*?

AMERICAN Educator

Summer 2000

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LETTERS

Why Read?

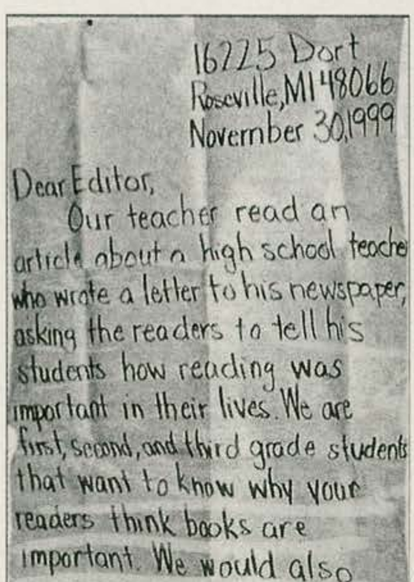
In the Fall 1999 issue, we published a piece entitled "Why Read?" It described how Jim Burke, a San Francisco high school teacher concerned about students who "claimed to 'hate' reading," decided to write a letter to the San Francisco Chronicle, *inviting that paper's readers to write to his students about "what role books and literature have played in your life." The response was thunderous. More than 400 letters poured in: "They kept coming day after day....My students were visibly affected by this attention...."*

We reprinted a selection of those letters and suggested to our readers that they try something similar in their communities. We since have heard from several teachers who took us up on the idea, including Nancy Creech, who teaches a mixed class of first-, second-, and third-graders at Dort Elementary School in Roseville, Michigan. The letter from Ms. Creech's class that was published in the Detroit Free Press, *along with her letter to us describing the heartening response, appear below.*

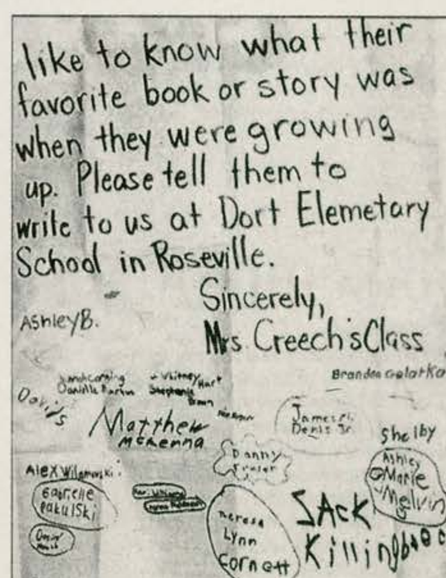
What better way to start the next school year than to have your class write to your local newspaper. Clearly, there are many, many people across the country who would welcome the chance to express what reading has meant in their lives. They need only to be asked. —*Editor*

Every Monday morning in my primary multiage classroom, we have "Meeting Time." It is a sharing time where we relate important events in our lives. When it was my turn, I shared the article that was written in your Fall issue titled, "Why Read?" The last sentence in your introduction states: "How about writing a letter to your own local newspaper, inviting people in your community to write to your students about what reading has meant in their lives." My class excitedly wrote a letter, and the *Detroit Free Press* published it. The response has been overwhelming. We received over 200 letters and e-mails in the first week, from all over the state of Michigan and across the country. They came from readers as young as 9, and we got an e-mail from an 85-year-old! Whole classrooms wrote to us. Many of the letters brought tears to my eyes. So thank you Jim Burke and *American Educator*, for creating this wonderful and powerful memory about reading for my students.

—NANCY CREECH
DORT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ROSEVILLE, MICHIGAN


16725 Dort
Roseville, MI 48066
November 30, 1999

Dear Editor,
Our teacher read an article about a high school teacher who wrote a letter to his newspaper, asking the readers to tell his students how reading was important in their lives. We are first, second, and third grade students that want to know why your readers think books are important. We would also


like to know what their favorite book or story was when they were growing up. Please tell them to write to us at Dort Elemetary School in Roseville.
Sincerely,
Mrs. Creech's Class

Ashley B.
Matthew McKenna
Shelby
Jack

LOST IN ACTION

Are time-consuming, trivializing activities displacing the cultivation of active *minds*?

BY GILBERT T. SEWALL

A THIRD-GRADE social studies student in California builds an Endangered Species "portfolio." For the entire year. This portfolio is given over to the demise of the toucan and the Galapagos tortoise. The portfolio is brightly colored, laminated and spiral bound, containing lots of glossy photographs clipped from magazines. Each page is thick with adhesive stick-ons and glitter. The portfolio contains many, many misspelled words and exhibits almost no understanding of the South American continent's natural history.

As traditional learning gives way in a growing number of classrooms, students encounter more and more projects and activities like the one above:

■ A seventh-grade suburban Maryland student builds a shoebox-sized replica of the items in his school locker for Spanish class. The academic content: He then labels the items in Spanish. Total time for the project: approximately 20 hours. Ninth-grade French class students in New York City scout cookbooks for crêpe suzette and omelet recipes. They create photo montages of the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame, making posters for display on classroom walls.

■ Selected members of a 10th-grade world history class receive cookies. The rest of the class goes empty-handed. This creates a room of haves and have nots. Students discuss how it feels to be left out, and how it feels to be the privileged few given the cookies to eat. The purpose: to prepare for the study of the French Revolution.

Leading textbooks, new tests, and academic journals reinforce these practices:

■ A third-grade math program devotes a week to the concept of 1,000. One lesson centers on "Thousand skits," in which students figure out things the class can do cooperatively to accomplish 1,000 repetitions and then try to act them out. "Work in groups of four to make up your skit. Decide what you will do, how many people you will need, and how many repetitions each person will do. Write down the directions for your skit." This lesson is taken from a textbook series the U.S. Department of Education recommended last year to school districts across the country.

■ A sixth-grade social studies textbook suggests: "Imagine you are a television reporter covering the Roman assault on Masada. Prepare a news report on this event."

■ An "authentic assessment" in "integrated science" designed to replace ordinary tests asks students to write a poem about mitosis. A journal of chemical education encourages high school science students to construct a new periodic table of the elements as it might appear on some unspecified alien planet.

No one contests some legitimate place for projects and activities in classrooms. But lost in the whirlwind, this doing and doing, is a sense of where the real action should be—in the *minds* of students. Activities enthusiasts are right not to want passive students. But they have made a dangerous error. They have substituted ersatz activity and shallow content for the hard and serious work of the mind.

Whether projects and activities are good or bad, successful or unsuccessful, they are without question popular. They elicit warm and positive feelings that are lodged in persuasive learning theories and sentiments held almost universally: that a variety of tasks, assignments, and methods makes education more pleasurable and memorable.

Activity-based learning is not confined to early child-

Gilbert T. Sewall is director of the American Textbook Council and, most recently, the editor of The Eighties: A Reader. *He writes frequently on education issues.*

ILLUSTRATED BY BRU ASSOCIATES

hood education or the lower grades, to a handful of "innovative" classrooms, to public education, or to mediocre schools. In elementary and high schools alike, public and private, it is taking the place of traditional lessons, essays, tests, and research papers. The trend is not a matter of a pendulum swinging a little too far in one direction. In many schools, activities more than supplement the text and lesson. Activities *are* the lesson.

Such teaching strategies have a long pedigree. Some call them the project method, a term often used interchangeably with "activities-based learning" and "hands-on learning." Content is tied to prior experiences or known student interests. In a 1996 report on how teachers try to stimulate interest in learning, John A. Zahorik at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee defined these hands-on activities very broadly, including lessons in which the "student is an active participant rather than a passive listener. The term includes the use of manipulatives such as pattern blocks in mathematics; playing games of all kinds; participating in simulations, role playing and drama; engaging in projects."

Education publishers, eager to keep up with pedagogical trends, have responded. Flip to any lesson in any up-to-date textbook. You'll find projects and activities at the core of the editorial apparatus. The most ambitious of the nation's new secondary-level history textbooks, McGraw-Hill/Glencoe's *American Journey* —whose authors include a former president of the American Historical Association and a Pulitzer Prize winner—features a Taffy Pull, complete with a recipe and an invitation for students to relive the social event of the 1800s and early 1900s.

Hands-on enthusiasts claim that traditional pedagogy and content are at the center of the "interest" problem. They assume project- and activity-based learning to be superior forms of instruction, kinder and more humane than the opposite, which is often lumped under the term "verbal learning." Language and letters, the many-splendored world of mathematics, the vast terrain of history and science, at least in pure form, according to this outlook, are limiting, boring, and possibly emotionally harmful to children.

Traditional classroom activities and content lose out—crowded and trimmed in order to accommodate projects. There's only so much school day, and projects and activities consume time greedily. To make room, time allotted to reading, writing, listening, critical dialogue, and directed inquiry inevitably shrinks. Serious learning takes a back seat.

ACTIVITIES EXPAND exponentially because teachers think that's what they are supposed to be doing. Administrators, curriculum specialists, education gurus, workshop presenters, psychologists, academic journals, and textbook publishers have told teachers that activities are the only way to engage students. "Chalk and talk" and "drill and kill" are the derisive names given to traditional approaches. Teachers, understandably, shudder at the thought of being associated with such dreary pedagogy. Should they resist the traditional wisdom, they may face scorn and intimidation for being instructionally out of date or even insensitive to student needs.

Lack of variety and imagination in assignments does lead to dull classrooms. Whole-class, teacher-led instruction is not always of high quality. But it certainly can be, frequently is, and would be much more often if it weren't caricatured as *inevitably* boring and ineffective, thus discouraging teachers from perfecting the art, as Japanese and Chinese teachers work so hard and successfully to do.*

Activities-based learning often suspends valid educational premises: that the ability to communicate derives from verbal training; that the ability to absorb, filter and process information requires facility with words and numbers; that general knowledge leads to project mastery; that getting there requires hard work and even then is not universally conferred.

The fear of passive learning may be spectacularly misdirected, but the chalk-and-talk caricature has done its work. Pressed to be events coordinators and social directors, teachers have been robbed of traditional pedagogy's vision of quality: the carefully prepared lesson, rich with analogy, illustration and anecdote; focused and guided; demanding and lively; peppered with good humor; with frequent interchange between student and teacher, student and student; interspersed with small-group work when appropriate; and with a clear sense of direction at the beginning and summary at the end, leaving all participants with a feeling of completion and satisfaction.

Sometimes teachers must inform directly; at other times they guide students to figure things out for themselves. Active, attentive listening—on the part of both teacher and students—is an imperative. Repetition, practice, and memorization have their part, as does learning to take organized notes. At the core, always, is serious content approached seriously. Knowledge builds on knowledge. Thirteen years of carefully sequenced content and jealously guarded classroom time allow students to build an enormous storehouse of knowledge and skills and the ability to use them. And since knowledge and success are the best breeding ground for interest to take root and expand, the more students know, the more they will want to know.

Under the leadership of their teacher, students work to unearth meaning; to evaluate, interpret, compare, extend, and apply; to analyze their errors, present their findings, defend their solutions; to attend carefully to what others say; to get their thoughts down clearly on paper; to understand. This is not boring and it is not passive. This is real action learning. This is the *mind* at work. Those who would banish such teaching by dismissing it as dull and ineffective are better advised to put their efforts into helping teachers sharpen these familiar and research-validated approaches.

Zahorik's report, entitled "Elementary and Secondary Teachers' Reports of How They Make Learning Interesting," reached the following conclusion based on an extensive survey of 65 teachers: "Hands-on activities are the primary way of establishing interest, although teachers also reported creating interest through the use of personalized content, student trust,

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* *See "Polishing the Stone: How Asian Teachers Perfect Their Lessons," by James Stigler and Harold Stevenson (*American Educator, *Spring 1991).*

The chalk-and-talk caricature has done its work. Pressed to be events coordinators and social directors, teachers have been robbed of traditional pedagogy's vision of quality.

and group tasks, and in other ways. *Teachers reported that they rarely used content facts and concepts as a means to establish interest"* [italics added]. All of the teachers except two secondary teachers identified "sedentary activities" as "producing disinterest and, often, causing antagonism." Of sedentary activities, Zahorik explained, "the behaviors and tasks that teachers saw as harmful to interest were lecturing, explaining, giving directions, reviewing, taking tests, reading textbooks, doing workbooks, and taking notes."

What has happened here? How did the humanities and sciences get declared a turnoff? This view is inert to the beauty and use of knowledge. The magic of Pythagoras and the value of the hypotenuse in navigating everyday life; the digestive system of mollusks and mammals; how cutting a sentence by half can sometimes double its power; the influence of Palladio on world architecture; the world as seen by Copernicus and Galileo; the building of the canals in China during the Ming dynasty and the transcontinental railroad in 19th century America; the story of the boy from hardscrabble Kentucky who became a president who preserved the Union and freed the slaves, Abraham Lincoln. The list of subjects that can move and instruct is endless. This content needs no dressing up or excuses. It stands on its own.

In the upper grades, social promotion and detracked classrooms contribute to hands-on practices. Teachers are rightly eager that all students succeed and that all students are at least marginally "engaged" in learning. Faced with the daunting task of teaching to a wide range of achievement, teachers feel they have no choice but to offer an array of activities accessible to even the most unprepared students.

POPULAR CULTURE blindsides some students. It provides mesmerizing entertainments, some incorporated into multimedia and educational software programming. These images and fast-paced electronics are emotionally seductive. Concerned that subject content fails to grab many students—who *are* grabbed by Nintendo, Channel One, and MTV—psychologists, school administrators, parents, and journalists pressure for more "innovative" learning styles and teaching strategies.

Consider the sixth-grade Live from Masada! project, an assignment that any ambitious teacher with the available technology can complicate, asking students to capture each classmate's sound bite on videotape and camcorder. Such an activity could easily expand to eat up a week or more of social studies for 25 students.

Logistics aside, the exercise contains a whiff of show biz. It sensationalizes and trivializes the subject. It cheapens the event. It deflects an opportunity to teach the epic struggle between Rome and the Jews in the early common era, paganism and Judaism set against the birth of Christianity in the first century. Live From Masada! suggests that events themselves are not sufficiently forceful or interesting to capture student attention. That the Roman siege and the deaths of 960 men, women, and children in the Judean desert requires a charade of Nightly News to make it interesting.

In a false bow to so-called critical thinking, history and social studies activities often embrace questions and events so complex and perplexing that the nation's greatest minds feel timorous in their presence, as the historian and essayist Paul Gagnon has noted. Prentice Hall's high school textbook *World History: Connections to Today,* for instance, asks students to ponder the question, "Is war ever justified?" based on very short observations about war from the ancient Chinese warrior Sun Tzu, the Aztecs, Catherine the Great, José Marti, Gandhi, and a member of Another Mother Against War.

This is followed by an activity in which students "investigate" other points of view, finally expressing the viewpoint they "agree with most" in their own ways, which may be "an essay, a cartoon, a poem, a drawing or painting, a song, a skit, a video, or some other way." In the same book, students are supposed to follow the same steps to "decide" such issues as "Is technology a blessing or curse?" and "Does diversity strengthen or weaken a society?"

Some activities are simply in bad taste. Francine Prose writing in *Harper's* magazine (September, 1999) notes Carolyn Smith McGowen's *Teaching Literature by Women Authors* (a book with which I am personally unfamiliar), a guide that gives this suggestion to teachers preparing to teach *The Diary of Anne Frank:* "Give each student a paper grocery bag. Explain that to avoid being sent to a concentration camp, many people went into hiding. Often they could take with them only what they could carry.... Ask your students to choose the items they would take into hiding. These items must fit into a grocery bag."

Hands-on activities often fold into writing assignments. Authors like Prose are puzzled when they encounter teachers' manuals and instructors' learning guides that verge on the bizarre. They learn from a teachers' guide called *Teaching the Novel:* Students might write a script for the TV news announcing the Macbeth murders or write a psychiatrist's report on Lady Macbeth. Students might write her suicide note to her husband, or Macbeth's entry in *Who's Who,* or his obituary. Prose deplores such writing around the subject. These teaching strategies are inert to the power of language, to the unparalleled contributions of Shakespeare in particular, and to the essence of human feeling and heart contained in his plays, she complains.

Prose condemns teaching strategies that put the student at the center of the subject, an increasingly common practice running throughout school-level humanities today. For Prose, "those who might have supposed that one purpose of fiction was to deploy the powers of language to connect us, directly and intimately, with the hearts and souls of others, will be disappointed to learn that the whole point is to make us examine ourselves." The wonder of Me.

Describe how you would react if.... Did you ever feel...? This second-person device now extends into textbook captions, lesson extensions, and classroom review exercises. But activities that continually thrust the student into the center of the literary or historical event "narrow the world of experience down to the personal," says Prose. They actually shrink the student's vision. They limit the student's imagination, which remains imprisoned in its own perspectives and experiences, which are often meager and mundane.

In activity-based learning, some teachers turn to drama. But classroom spectacles such as simulations and mock trials are usually doomed from the start. Students rarely have the personal finesse or rhetorical skill that role playing or debate requires to succeed. When they do, students must bring a staggering amount of background knowledge to the table. If they don't have ample familiarity with the subject, such activities fatally lack content. These skits and theatrics may provide an opportunity for student high jinks. But if these activities backfire or fall flat, as they often do, the results can be extremely painful for teacher and student. Take some favorites: To study the origins of the Cold War, Harry Truman meets Stalin at Potsdam or stands trial for having bombed Hiroshima. Lyndon Johnson defends U.S. policy in Vietnam. Richard Nixon defends himself.

These efforts put the cart before the horse. In the case of the Cold War, how much more trustworthy and valuable, simpler and richer it would be to read accounts and study maps of the Allied military movements in 1945, the fall of Czechoslovakia, the white paper on containment, or the Marshall address at Harvard University that led to the pan-European economic recovery program. If Korea or Vietnam are to be understood, students must first understand the nature of Soviet aggression in Europe after 1945. So versed, students have a key to understanding geopolitics before 1989 and after.

Projects and activities can breed student cynicism. It

To engage the naturalist intelligence, another teaching strategy from Armstrong's guide suggests that high school teachers "use a class pet as a kind of 'alter ego' for the classroom in posing instructional questions...."

does not take long for some students to figure out that activities waste a lot of time and that some activities are pretty lame. Students may wonder what the point is, especially when they encounter dozens or even a hundred projects or activities during the course of the school year instead of a well-chosen handful carried out with precision and depth.

ACTIVITY-BASED learning is vain. It presupposes that it alone is responsive to the "inner gifts" of children, especially children who are challenged or overmatched by traditional academic learning. A salting of high theory stands behind it, theory that is reinforced in faculty lounges and workshops and that has special appeal to those who face a rising number of children who seem alienated from words and numbers.

Teachers are on the receiving end of much bad information about learning. Not only do they endure pressure from gurus and guides. Complicit are schools of education that encourage teachers not to be "hung up on facts" but to concentrate on nurturing self-esteem and individuality. Methods classes uncritically praise project learning and activity-based learning. They subscribe to a set of principles at odds with classical education that go back 75 or 80 years, to William Kilpatrick's project method and Harold Rugg's child-centered school.

Project-based learning enthusiasts want children to be—here we return to affective philosophy—active. The learning process, they say, should be "tactile." With busy hands and classrooms in motion. According to powerful currents that influence how teachers frame their lesson plans, educational success should be joyful noise and creative disorder, durable concepts of the 1970s. In motivational educational workshops, a teacher learns not to be a "sage on the stage." She should be a "guide on the side." Deep bias exists against a teacher-centered classroom.

Those preparing to be teachers rarely hear that some projects are neither beneficial nor valuable, that they may in fact corrupt subtle thinking about a subject. That if projects are to succeed, they must be limited in scope and time. Or that projects need to be filled out and supplemented with generous amounts of reading and writing. Orderly classrooms and unadorned lessons are minuses, they hear, as is "rote" education too terrible to behold.

The typology of talent and intelligence bends so far as to render academic education peripheral or competitive with other varieties of knowledge. Projects, it is said, are more sensitive to diversity and different intelligences. They honor individual modes of expression. Fine if you are a cognitive type...but if you are not, no problem. Word and number learning were demoted during the 1990s, joined in school by new kinds of intelligence that all seemed to cry for activities-based learning. The premier exponent of this "multiple intelligences" (MI) schema—the most powerful force in progressive education today—is Howard Gardner, the tireless promoter of the theory. Sage-on-the-stage Gardner is Harvard University's professor of cognition and education, and an adjunct professor of psychology, a staple on news and talk shows, and author of dozens of books, monographs, and videos.

The MI concept—originated by Gardner in the early 1980s and embraced by education organizations, schools, and experts—has achieved doctrinal status in a short time. According to Gardner's widely accepted schema, word (linguistic) and number (logical-mathematical) smart are two kinds of smart. But so is picture smart (spatial), body smart (bodily-kinesthetic), music smart (musical), people smart (interpersonal), self smart (intrapersonal), and—his newest addition—nature smart (naturalist). The MI appeal is obvious. It caters to the idea of individual modes of learning, itself a concept that research has failed to deliver on but that nevertheless remains a central progressive interest and promise. It is rooted in American fair play. It levels the playing field.

Howard Gardner knows that many very silly things are said in his name. But the writings in Thomas Armstrong's *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom* (ASCD, second edition, 2000), published with the imprimatur of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, cannot be among them. The book appears with Gardner's blessing. In a preface, Gardner vouches for the accuracy, clarity, broad range, and the teacher-friendliness of the book. He calls it a "reliable and readable account of my work" that "conveys a vivid idea of what MI classes, teaching moves, curricula, and assessments can be like."

Armstrong's guide is a veritable encyclopedia of non-traditional teaching strategies. To tap into interpersonal intelligence, the book extols the construction and use of board games "easily made using manila file folders, magic markers...a pair of dice and miniature cars, people or colored cubes...to serve as game pieces. Topics can include a wide range of subjects, from math facts and phonics skills to rain forest data and history questions." In Armstrong's world, animal sounds, plant symbols, class plays, making pictures, and color coding are alternate ways to learn about punctuation.

To engage the naturalist intelligence, another teaching strategy suggests that high school teachers "use a class pet as a kind of 'alter ego' for the classroom in posing instructional questions (e.g., 'How do you think our rabbit Albert would feel about the problem of world hunger?'). Students who relate best to the world through their love of animals might well use Albert's persona in giving voice to their own thinking on the matter."

In featured examples in the book's appendix, for a fifth-grade history lesson on the development of Rhode Island, students—depending on their "smarts"—can choose between traditional approaches such as reading a textbook and creating a timeline, *or* they can relate the settlement of Rhode Island to their own need or desire to break away from authority, or compare the settlement of Rhode Island with the growth of an amoeba. (It's hard to know what this last learning exercise means or means to teach.) But such antic activities will undoubtedly influence some impressionable curriculum specialists, just as they reinforce the false notion that learning should be cheery and blithe. (Learning is often very hard and even te-

(Continued on page 42)

BAD ATTITUDE

Confronting the Views that Hinder Students' Learning

BY VINCENT RYAN RUGGIERO

SOME YEARS ago, while conducting a workshop, I had an interesting conversation with a teacher who had recently been a runner-up for "Teacher of the Year" in her state. Even though she had been in the profession for about 15 years, she seemed to have retained the high enthusiasm and optimism of a beginning teacher. Nevertheless, something was troubling her. "A few years ago, when I returned from a sabbatical," she explained, "I noticed a difference in the students. They seemed less interested in learning, more impatient, less polite to one another, and less respectful of me than my previous classes had been. At first I decided that the students probably were no different, but that being out of the classroom for a year and working with adults had affected my perception.

"When the impression didn't go away but became stronger," she continued, "I thought I might be experiencing burnout. But that didn't seem likely because I was still excited about teaching and enjoyed interacting with students. In addition, preparing lively and interesting lessons had always been a strong point for me, and I was sure the lessons I was then using were at least as good as any I had used in the past. Eventually, I decided my original impression had been correct—the students had changed, in fact were continuing to change, and not for the better."

My interest in that teacher's story was heightened by the fact that my own experience in the classroom supported it. And since that time, hundreds of teachers have shared similar stories with me. Indisposition to learn seems to be considerably more widespread than it was a generation or two ago.

What is the cause of this indisposition? Depending on which pundit one reads, the fault lies with teacher

incompetence, parental dereliction, or socioeconomic deprivation. Without denying that these factors exist and in many cases seriously aggravate the situation, I propose that they are not the main cause of the problem. That cause is the *attitudes* students bring to the classroom, attitudes that obstruct teaching and thwart learning.

The negative attitudes we see in our students can be traced to ideas of "selfism" advanced by modern philosophers and/or psychologists throughout this century and, in some cases, in previous centuries. Of course, very few students are familiar with the original expression of these ideas, but many are familiar with popularized (and sometimes distorted) versions of the original ideas. And virtually all students have been exposed to the advertising industry's and the entertainment and communications media's glamorization of the self-help message. This glamorization may have a more powerful effect than reading because it occurs when the mind is essentially at rest.

The concept of self-improvement has undergone dramatic change since 1911, when Ambrose Bierce mockingly defined self-esteem as "an erroneous appraisement." Good and bad character are now known as "personality differences." Rights have replaced responsibilities. The research on *egocentrism* and *ethnocentrism* that informed discussion of human growth and development in the mid-20th century is ignored; indeed, the terms themselves are considered politically incorrect. A revolution has taken place in the vocabulary of self. Words that imply responsibility or accountability—*self-criticism, self-denial, self-discipline, self-control, self-effacement, self-mastery, self-reproach,* and *self-sacrifice*—are no longer in fashion. The lan-

ILLUSTRATED BY GUY SCHUM

guage most in favor is that which exalts the self—*self-expression, self-assertion, self-indulgence, self-realization, self-approval, self-acceptance, self-love,* and the ubiquitous *self-esteem.*

Not content with self-adulation, many psyche-strokers have escalated their message. They now urge self-worship! Swami Muktananda chants, "God dwells within you as you; worship your Self," confirming the message of Ramtha, the reportedly 35,000-year-old warrior who speaks through the actress Shirley MacLaine. Ray Bradbury, science fiction writer turned theologian, preaches, "We are God giving Himself a reason for being." Psychologist Will Schutz exults, "I am everywhere, I am omniscient, I am God." And New Age author Jack Underhill inspires his readers by proclaiming, "You are the only thing that is real. Everything else is your imagination...."

The hyperbole may have increased, but the essential message of selfism has been the same for almost four decades. Such prolonged exposure to any theme is bound to influence not just young people but adults as well. As a result, many adults outspokenly champion that message and strongly resent any criticism of it. Others have not formally embraced the message but tend to regard it favorably and are skeptical of arguments against it. Still others are not so much favorably disposed to the message as they are familiar and comfortable with it and therefore disinclined to question it. Taken together, the number of people in these classifications is larger than the number who have become suspicious of selfism and are therefore willing to subject its claims to critical examination. Fortunately, the latter group includes many teachers, undoubtedly because they, more than any other group, have had to deal with the consequences of selfism.

Why Students Aren't Learning

The cartoon shows a blackboard with "A, B, C, D, E, F, G" written on it. The teacher stands with chalk in her hand, having just been interrupted by the little boy standing at her side. "I hope that's about all of them," he says. "I'm beginning to lose interest." Every teacher knows that beneath the humor lies the depressing reality that many students share the little boy's perspective. For them schoolwork is a useless distraction from the unceasing enjoyment they believe to be everyone's birthright. Their lack of motivation prevents them from acquiring basic skills and knowledge, as well as from developing the habits of dependability and persistence necessary for success in school and in life. They attend class irregularly, refuse to do homework, and are contemptuous if not downright hostile toward their teachers and peers.

Pundits are largely oblivious to the problem posed by such behaviors, no doubt because they are so busy crying malfeasance and reciting the old accusatory litany: "If the students haven't learned, the teacher hasn't taught," "The more teachers are paid, the less they accomplish," "Their workday and workyear are too short," "Tenure has ensured incompetence," "The teachers' unions have too much power." Nor are teachers the only objects of such criticisms. Parents, too, are presumed to be shirking their responsibilities, and being too permissive, indulgent, and quick to defend their children, even when the behavior in question is not merely disruptive but criminal.

No reasonable person will deny that there are incompetent or irresponsible teachers and parents; in fact, a strong argument could be made that the extent and degree of dereliction are greater today than they have ever been. But the carpers too conveniently ignore another, in some ways more significant fact—a great many, and perhaps most, of today's parents and teachers espouse values very similar to those of past generations:

They urge students to become active participants in learning and in life.

They stress that truth is discovered by study and reflection.

They emphasize that the essential ingredient in achievement is effort.

They value informed opinions over uninformed opinions.

They urge a more demanding moral standard than personal preference.

They portray intellectual activities as rewarding and satisfying.

They believe self-improvement involves changing one's self.

They place a high value on critical thinking and encourage its development.

They urge students to practice self-discipline and make their lives count.

The Source of Opposing Values

If large numbers of teachers and parents have not abandoned these time-honored values and in fact are doing their best to promote them, who or what is causing so many young people to adopt *opposing* attitudes? The answer is so obvious that one can only marvel that the pundits have succeeded in ignoring it: *mass culture,* the ideas and values disseminated by the entertainment and communications media (books, newspapers, magazines, popular music, radio, and television) and by the advertising industry.

In opposition to active living, mass culture promotes a spectator mentality and a desire to be entertained.

In opposition to objective truth, mass culture extols subjective, design-it-yourself reality—"If I believe it, then it is true for me."

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In opposition to achievement through effort, mass culture promotes achievement through proclamation—"I am good, I am talented, I am wonderful."

In opposition to informed opinion, mass culture suggests that all opinions are equally meritorious.

In opposition to a demanding moral standard, mass culture extols doing whatever feels good.

In opposition to intellectual activities, mass culture teaches that the only satisfying activities are those that dazzle the senses.

In opposition to improvement through constructive change, mass culture promotes accepting and asserting one's self and inflicting self on others.

In opposition to thinking, mass culture (particularly the advertising industry) plays on the public's needs and desires and prompts people to suspend critical judgment and accept biased testimony as fact.

In opposition to self-discipline, mass culture lauds immoderation and lack of restraint.

In fairness, it should be noted that media and advertising people did not conceive these ideas themselves; they merely encountered the thinking of various scholars and researchers (often in popularized form) and embraced that thinking. The idea that morality is relative and subjective, for example, derives from such philosophers as David Hume and Bertrand Russell. (As the Roman statesman and philosopher Cicero once remarked, "There is nothing so ridiculous but some philosopher has said it.") And the notion that self-esteem is indispensable for achievement can be traced to humanistic psychology, notably the work of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. In some cases, mass culture represented the original ideas faithfully; in others, it oversimplified or otherwise distorted them. But in every instance the disseminators have presented the ideas more powerfully, and to a vastly wider audience, than the scholars had done. Theories that once were accessible only to advanced students of narrow areas of specialization are now broadcast, often dramatically, to millions of people who lack the maturity or educational background to evaluate them discerningly.

Consider the impact of a single medium, television. By age 18 a person who has watched three hours of television a day (from age 5) will have been exposed to over 14,000 hours of mass culture's ideas and values, enhanced by laugh and applause tracks, background music, and other devices of emphasis. Much of that time, of course, is devoted to commercials, which, since the advent of the 15-second commercial in the 1980s, occur at a rate of 44 per hour. The average television viewer is bombarded with more than *48,000 commercials annually,* each of them a cleverly designed appeal, wrapped in the values of mass culture.

Among the myriad themes of popular culture, three are particularly powerful and inimical to learning: self-indulgence, impulsiveness, and instant gratification. Self-indulgence says, "I am entitled to do or say whatever I wish because I am more important than other people"; impulsiveness, "I should follow my urges because spontaneity is more desirable than reflectiveness and restraint is repressive"; and instant gratification, "Pleasure delayed is pleasure denied." The logical corollary to these themes is that anyone who promotes self-control, restraint, and delayed gratification—notably a parent or a teacher—is ignorant of human nature, obstructive of the process of growth and development, and in violation of other people's inalienable rights.

Little wonder that movies depict parents and teachers as nerds, neanderthals, or worse. Or that best-selling self-help authors like Wayne Dyer and Peter McWilliams scorn the lessons of home and school. Dyer (1995) informs his readers, "You are sacred, and in order to know it you must transcend the old belief system you've adopted" (p. xii). (Imagine the extraordinary arrogance and gall required to condemn so cavalierly *all* the lessons of *all* parents and teachers!) McWilliams (1991, 1994) goes further, defining "evil" as the "unnecessary life experience" or "learned junk" imposed on unsuspecting students by parents, teachers, and other authorities. He advises his readers to reject that "shell of imitation good" and seek the genuine good, which lies where else but in everyone's core self, that lovely "sea of peace, calm, and joy."

From all indications these writers, and the legions of others who share their good child/evil adults perspective, are quite serious. More's the pity, for their theory defies common sense. They would have us believe that everyone comes into the world virtuous and wise and becomes evil and foolish only when parents and teachers begin to guide their development. The problem is, the parents and teachers were once children themselves. How did *they* lose their virtue and wisdom and become corrupters of the young? Are *their* parents to blame? And were *those* parents not deprived of their perfection by *their* parents before them? Where did it all begin?

The self-help gurus and other sages do not follow the logic of their position and ask these pertinent questions because doing so would allow those convenient villains, teachers and parents, to absolve themselves by pointing the finger of blame back to the previous generation. And the inevitable infinite regression, through which every generation assigns responsibility for its condition to the previous generation (all the way back to Adam and Eve, who blamed the devil), is not nearly so much fun for the pundits as blaming flesh-and-blood contemporaries.

Silly theories aside, *the principal reason for today's academic deficiency is that mass culture has undermined young people's desire to learn and their respect for parents and teachers.* This unfortunate situation is not likely to change dramatically until the purveyors of that culture acknowledge their responsibility to help rather than hinder the process of education. Teachers, of course, cannot afford to wait for that happy eventuality; they must help students see the fallacies in mass culture's perspective on life now so they can make the most of their time in school.

Recognizing Obstructive Attitudes

Before students can be motivated to alter their attitudes, they must first understand which ones are beneficial and which create obstacles to their success and personal fulfillment. The most obvious way for students to achieve this understanding would be to have them analyze their own behavior, conceptualize and evaluate the underlying beliefs, and decide whether they are reasonable. Not only is that way too sophisticated and difficult for the great majority of students, particularly younger students, to follow; it also demands a level of interest and motivation relatively few students possess. The approach taken in my book, *Changing Attitudes,* and its companion workbook. *Thinking Critically About Attitudes,* is considerably easier and more practical: providing students with already conceptualized and expressed ideas and guiding them to test the ideas against their own experience and knowledge. In this article, we will examine several widespread, unhealthy attitudes and consider the context in which each is likely to occur and the way it blocks learning. More importantly, we will probe the error of each attitude and identify an alternative perspective that enhances rather than impedes learning. This treatment, alas, will not be—indeed, *cannot* be—entirely free of controversy because we teachers have been exposed to the same mass culture that has corrupted students' attitudes and values. Although that culture may not have affected us nearly as broadly or as deeply as it has our students—for example, it may not have succeeded in displacing our core values—we cannot reasonably deny its existence or the likelihood that it has to some extent affected our thinking about important matters.

Two brief examples will illustrate the fact that mass culture influences teachers as well as students. If a professor had said 40 or 50 years ago, "There are no right answers in this course," the students would probably have reported him or her to the dean for admitting incompetence or for proclaiming that a course they were paying good money for lacked meaningful content—or both. Then, in the late 1960s and early 1970s the "no right answers" saying was heard in classrooms around the nation. Did it miraculously occur independently to a few hundred thousand people? Hardly. Political correctness of the day required that professors talk like that (much as it required them to arrange classroom seating in a circle and adopt the attire then fashionable among students). Instead of objecting to this disclaimer, many otherwise brilliant individuals willingly surrendered their better judgment and proceeded to chant "no right answers here," often for years, apparently never once wondering whether this mantra harmed students' motivation to learn or contradicted the "objective" testing used in the course.

The second example is more contemporary. Legions of elementary and secondary school teachers remind their students at every opportunity, "You can be anything you want to be and do anything you want to do. There are no limits except those you impose on yourself." Since they say this in complete seriousness, they obviously have never pondered the odds of a tone-deaf man singing lead tenor at the Met or a 5' 1" woman playing center for the Los Angeles Lakers. No matter how pure the intentions of such teachers, they are talking lunacy, and cruel lunacy at that. Life itself imposes all kinds of restrictions on us all, and the earlier in life we learn it, the less traumatic the realization will be. Some of us are positively overflowing with musical potential; others couldn't carry a tune with the combined assistance of Pavarotti, Domingo, and Carreras. Some have impressive mechanical aptitude; others couldn't program a VCR if their lives depended on it. And so on down the long list of capacities.

Why are so many teachers committed to the "you can be anything" message? Certainly not because they have no other choices. With a small investment of imagination, they could think of half a dozen inspiring things to say that have the additional virtue of being sensible and honest, things that build genuine rather than false confidence. No, they say it for no other reason than that the self-help industry has proclaimed that students won't feel good about themselves unless they say it, and if students don't feel good about themselves they are doomed to failure.

Some readers may take offense at the suggestion that teachers, as well as students, are vulnerable to fallacious thinking. This reaction is understandable. For several decades, mass culture has incessantly promoted the notions that any ideas one has are necessarily correct because one has them and that acknowledging one's limitations destroys self-confidence. Far from being the insights they are purported to be, these notions have proved to be powerful obstacles to progress in the various academic fields, as well as impediments to students' learning. They promise intellectual liberation but create slaves to whim, first impression, and self-serving interpretation. If we want students to defer judgment, give every idea a fair hearing, and base their evaluation on an idea's strengths and weaknesses rather than on its familiarity or compatibility with their personal viewpoint, we must model this behavior through good example. Preaching alone will not be enough.

A Strategy for Dealing with Attitudes

Attitudes are difficult to address in the classroom because the beliefs that underlie them are seldom expressed verbally and thus tend to remain below the level of students' consciousness. To say that these beliefs are not expressed in words, however, is not to say there is any great impediment to expressing them. Similarly, to say students are generally unaware of their attitudes does not mean they cannot *become* aware. It is possible, in the words of the cliché, to "get in touch with" our attitudes, and not just in the sense of experiencing them. We can apprehend them intellectually, know them *in terms of the beliefs they flow from.* A male chauvinist might, for example, come to the realization that his attitude toward women could be accurately stated as "Women are inferior to men," "Women exist to be dominated by men," or even "Women are contemptible." This realization would enable him to assess his attitude.

The strategy for helping students to cultivate more positive attitudes is rooted in this maxim: *The sharper and more complete one's awareness of a phenomenon, the more fully it can be understood and evaluated.* By expressing attitudes as beliefs, we make them accessible to logical analysis. Such a transformation is in no way artificial because attitudes and the beliefs that fuel them are interwoven. Every attitude implies one or more corresponding beliefs. If I display hostility toward you, the implication is that you have done something to me to warrant my attitude. If you have done nothing to me, my hostility is clearly misplaced. If I consider your presence in "my" workplace or neighborhood, or your very existence, to be an offense against me, my hostility is not only misplaced but profoundly illogical. As long as my hostility remains below the surface of consciousness, I will undoubtedly never be disposed to test its appropriateness. Only when I encounter it as a belief, either through my own effort at self-understanding or through reading or addressing a homework assignment, am I likely to be able to appraise it.

Simply stated, the strategy for dealing with attitudes is to (1) determine the specific attitudes that impede student learning in your course, (2) express the attitudes as beliefs, and (3) guide students in analyzing the beliefs and reaching conclusions that reflect both the principles of logic and the students' own experiences. Of course, many students have little or no acquaintance with logic and, given mass culture's elevation of feeling over thought, are inclined to view their own experiences shallowly and are indisposed to trust logic. Moreover, the knowledge that a belief is unreasonable will not automatically lead to rejection of the attitude associated with it. Still, one thing is certain—the more insight students gain into the beliefs discussed here, the more difficult it will be for them to maintain unhealthy attitudes such as the ones that follow.

Unhealthy Attitudes

"Being myself makes self-discipline unnecessary"

For almost half a century, psychologists have focused more attention on "being" and "becoming" than those concepts had received in any previous age. Unfortunately, the result has been befuddlement rather than insight. If an author had titled a book *On Becoming a Person,* say, a couple of hundred years ago, he would have been thought intellectually deficient. Educated people would have said, "Dear fellow, one doesn't become a person—one simply is a person. To speak of becoming what one already is is ludicrous." But times change. In the allegedly enlightened mid-1900s, Carl Rogers' book of that very title became a bestseller and profoundly influenced both the profession of psychology and mass culture. Rogers (1961) expressed this view of being and becoming:

> *I find I am more effective when I can listen acceptantly to myself, and can be myself...*When I accept myself as I am, then I change...We cannot change, we cannot move away from what we are, until we thoroughly *accept* what we are. Then change seems to come about almost unnoticed. (p. 17)

In this and other books, Rogers resurrected Rousseau and scorned the historic wisdom that had been shared throughout the centuries by virtually every intellectual tradition, West or East. Moreover, he created a confusion that has plagued the self-improvement industry up to the present. Virtually every book, article, tape, seminar, workshop, and educational program on the subject rhapsodizes about becoming, developing, and actualizing the self—and then promptly contradicts itself by defining the process in terms of being what one already is. This near unanimity is understandable—to approve the idea of changing the self would be to commit heresy against the doctrine of inherent goodness and individuality.

The popular expression of the self-help message is "Let yourself be—put aside artificial constraints and inhibitions and allow the authentic you to burst forth." With prior restraint of the self branded anathema, we should not be at all surprised that students regard self-discipline as an impediment to self-actualization.

The challenge to teachers is to help students overcome the prevalent confusion about being and becoming. Common sense supports the traditional view that we are all persons by virtue of being human. Our personhood, like our humanity, is utterly complete, and it is ludicrous to speak of becoming what we already are. Because the essence of becoming is change, we can become only *what we are not.* Change, of course, may be either a matter of degree or of kind, so we can both gain qualities we don't now have and also enlarge the qualities we do have. The unmannerly can acquire manners, the cruel can become kind, the monolingual can master other languages. Similarly, those who are already studious, tolerant, patient, or compassionate can become more so. Change, of course, is not always for the better. Accidentally or by choice, we may become worse than we were. Everyday experience reminds us that we can ill afford to relax our effort to improve.

This understanding of becoming blends perfectly with the ideas that we are imperfect rather than inherently wise and good, and that both individuality and knowledge are gained by effort rather than being inborn. All of which underlines two axioms upon which genuine self-improvement, in or out of the classroom,

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Democracy as a Universal Value

By Amartya Sen

In the summer of 1997, I was asked by a leading Japanese newspaper what I thought was the most important thing that had happened in the 20th century. I found this to be an unusually thought-provoking question, since so many things of gravity have happened over the last hundred years. The European empires, especially the British and French ones that had so dominated the 19th century, came to an end. We witnessed two world wars. We saw the rise and fall of fascism and Nazism. The century witnessed the rise of communism, and its fall (as in the former Soviet bloc) or radical transformation (as in China). We also saw a shift from the economic dominance of the West to a new economic balance much more dominated by Japan and East and Southeast Asia. Even though that region is going through some financial and economic problems right now, this is not going to nullify the shift in the balance of the world economy that has occurred over many decades (in the case of Japan, through nearly the entire century). The past hundred years are not lacking in important events.

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Nevertheless, among the great variety of developments that have occurred in the 20th century, I did not, ultimately, have any difficulty in choosing one as the preeminent development of the period: the rise of democracy. This is not to deny that other occurrences have also have been important, but I would argue that in the distant future, when people look back at what happened in this century, they will find it difficult not to accord primacy to the emergence of democracy as the preeminently acceptable form of governance.

The idea of democracy originated, of course, in ancient Greece, more than two millennia ago. Piecemeal efforts at democratization were attempted elsewhere as well, including in India.[1] But it is really in ancient Greece that the idea of democracy took shape and was seriously put into practice (albeit on a limited scale), before it collapsed and was replaced by more authoritarian and asymmetric forms of government. There were no other kinds anywhere else.

Thereafter, democracy as we know it took a long time to emerge. Its gradual—and ultimately triumphant—emergence as a working system of governance was bolstered by many developments, from the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215, to the French and the American Revolutions in the 18th century, to the widening of the franchise in Europe and North America in the 19th century. It was in the 20th century, however, that the idea of democracy became established as the "normal" form of government to which any nation is entitled—whether in Europe, America, Asia, or Africa.

The idea of democracy as a universal commitment is quite new, and it is quintessentially a product of the 20th century. The rebels who forced restraint on the king of England through the Magna Carta saw the need as an entirely local one. In contrast, the American fighters for independence and the revolutionaries in France contributed greatly to an understanding of the

ILLUSTRATED BY BOBBI PRATTE

need for democracy as a general system. Yet the focus of their practical demands remained quite local—confined, in effect, to the two sides of the North Atlantic, and founded on the special economic, social, and political history of the region.

Throughout the 19th century, theorists of democracy found it quite natural to discuss whether one country or another was "fit for democracy." This thinking changed only in the 20th century, with the recognition that the question itself was wrong: A country does not have to be deemed fit *for* democracy; rather, it has to become fit *through* democracy. This is indeed a momentous change, extending the potential reach of democracy to cover billions of people, with their varying histories and cultures and disparate levels of affluence.

It was also in this century that people finally accepted that "franchise for all adults" must mean *all*—not just men but also women. When in January [1999] I had the opportunity to meet Ruth Dreyfuss, the president of Switzerland and a woman of remarkable distinction, it gave me occasion to recollect that only a quarter century ago Swiss women could not even vote. We have at last reached the point of recognizing that the coverage of universality, like the quality of mercy, is not strained.

I do not deny that there are challenges to democracy's claim to universality. These challenges come in many shapes and forms—and from different directions. Indeed, that is part of the subject of this essay. I have to examine the claim of democracy as a universal value and the disputes that surround that claim. Before I begin that exercise, however, it is necessary to grasp clearly the sense in which democracy has become a dominant belief in the contemporary world.

In any age and social climate, there are some sweeping beliefs that seem to command respect as a kind of general rule—like a "default" setting in a computer program; they are considered right *unless* their claim is somehow precisely negated. While democracy is not yet universally practiced, nor indeed uniformly accepted, in the general climate of world opinion, democratic governance has now achieved the status of being taken to be generally right. The ball is very much in the court of those who want to rubbish democracy to provide justification for that rejection.

This is a historic change from not very long ago, when the advocates of democracy for Asia or Africa had to argue for democracy with their backs to the wall. While we still have reason enough to dispute those who, implicitly or explicitly, reject the need for democracy, we must also note clearly how the general climate of opinion has shifted from what it was in previous centuries. We do not have to establish afresh, each time, whether such and such a country (South Africa, or Cambodia, or Chile) is "fit for democracy" (a question that was prominent in the discourse of the 19th century); we now take that for granted. This recognition of democracy as a universally relevant system, which moves in the direction of its acceptance as a universal value, is a major revolution in thinking, and one of the main contributions of the 20th century. It is in this context that we have to examine the question of democracy as a universal value.

I have discussed elsewhere the remarkable fact that, in the terrible history of famines in the world, no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent and democratic country with a relatively free press.

The Indian Experience

How well has democracy worked? While no one really questions the role of democracy in, say, the United States or Britain or France, it is still a matter of dispute for many of the poorer countries in the world. This is not the occasion for a detailed examination of the historical record, but I would argue that democracy has worked well enough.

India, of course, was one of the major battlegrounds of this debate. In denying Indians independence, the British expressed anxiety over the Indians' ability to govern themselves. India was indeed in some disarray in 1947, the year it became independent. It had an untried government, an undigested partition, and unclear political alignments, combined with widespread communal violence and social disorder. It was hard to have faith in the future of a united and democratic India. And yet, half a century later, we find a democracy that has, taking the rough with the smooth, worked remarkably well. Political differences have been largely tackled within the constitutional guidelines, and governments have risen and fallen according to electoral and parliamentary rules. An ungainly, unlikely, inelegant combination of differences, India nonetheless survives and functions remarkably well as a political unit with a democratic system. Indeed, it is held together by its working democracy.

India has also survived the tremendous challenge of dealing with a variety of major languages and a spectrum of religions. Religious and communal differences are, of course, vulnerable to exploitation by sectarian politicians, and have indeed been so used on several occasions (including in recent months), causing massive consternation in the country. Yet the fact that consternation greets sectarian violence and that condemnation of such violence comes from all sections of the country ultimately provides the main democratic guarantee against the narrowly factional exploitation of sectarianism. This is, of course, essential for the survival and prosperity of a country as remarkably varied as India, which is home not only to a Hindu majority, but to the world's third largest Muslim population, to millions of Christians and Buddhists, and to most of the world's Sikhs, Parsees, and Jains.

Democracy and Economic Development

It is often claimed that nondemocratic systems are better at bringing about economic development. This belief sometimes goes by the name of "the Lee hypothesis," due to its advocacy by Lee Kuan Yew, the leader and former president of Singapore. He is certainly right that some disciplinarian states (such as South Korea, his own Singapore, and postreform China) have had faster rates of economic growth than many less authoritarian ones (including India, Jamaica, and Costa Rica). The "Lee hypothesis," however, is based on sporadic empiricism, drawing on very selective and limited information, rather than on any general statistical testing over the wide-ranging data that are available. A general relation of this kind cannot be established on the basis of very selective evidence. For example, we cannot really take the high economic growth of Singapore or China as "definitive proof" that authoritarianism does better in promoting economic growth, any more than we can draw the opposite conclusion from the fact that Botswana, the country with the best record of economic growth in Africa, indeed with one of the finest records of economic growth in the whole world, has been an oasis of democracy on that continent over the decades. We need more systematic empirical studies to sort out the claims and counterclaims.

There is, in fact, no convincing general evidence that authoritarian governance and the suppression of political and civil rights are really beneficial to economic development. Indeed, the general statistical picture does not permit any such induction. Systematic empirical studies (for example, by Robert Barro or by Adam Przeworski) give no real support to the claim that there is a general conflict between political rights and economic performance.[2] The directional linkage seems to depend on many other circumstances, and while some statistical investigations note a weakly negative relation, others find a strongly positive one. If all the comparative studies are viewed together, the hypothesis that there is no clear relation between economic growth and democracy in *either* direction remains extremely plausible. Since democracy and political liberty have importance in themselves, the case for them therefore remains untarnished.[3]

The question also involves a fundamental issue of methods of economic research. We must not only look at statistical connections, but also examine and scrutinize the *causal* processes that are involved in economic growth and development. The economic policies and circumstances that led to the economic success of countries in East Asia are by now reasonably well understood. While different empirical studies have varied in emphasis, there is by now broad consensus on a list of "helpful policies" that includes openness to competition, the use of international markets, public provision of incentives for investment and export, a high level of literacy and schooling, successful land reforms, and other social opportunities that widen participation in the process of economic expansion. There is no reason at all to assume that any of these policies is inconsistent with greater democracy and had to be forcibly sustained by the elements of authoritarianism that happened to be present in South Korea or Singapore or China. Indeed, there is overwhelming evidence to show that what is needed for generating faster economic growth is a friendlier economic climate rather than a harsher political system.

To complete this examination, we must go beyond the narrow confines of economic growth and scrutinize the broader demands of economic development, including the need for economic and social security. In that context, we have to look at the connection between political and civil rights, on the one hand, and the prevention of major economic disasters, on the other. Political and civil rights give people the opportunity to draw attention forcefully to general needs and to demand appropriate public action. The response of a government to the acute suffering of its people often depends on the pressure that is put on it. The exercise of political rights (such as voting, criticizing, protesting, and the like) can make a real difference to the political incentives that operate on a government.

I have discussed elsewhere the remarkable fact that, in the terrible history of famines in the world, no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent and democratic country with a relatively free press.[4] We cannot find exceptions to this rule, no matter where we look: the recent famines of Ethiopia, Somalia, or other dictatorial regimes; famines in the Soviet Union in the 1930s; China's 1958-1961 famine with the failure of the Great Leap Forward; or earlier still, the famines in Ireland or India under alien rule. China, although it was in many ways doing much better economically than India, still managed (unlike India) to have a famine, indeed the largest recorded famine in world history: Nearly 30 million people died in the famine of 1958-1961, while faulty governmental policies remained uncorrected for three full years. The policies went uncriticized because there were no opposition parties in parliament, no free press, and no multiparty elections. Indeed, it is precisely this lack of challenge that allowed the deeply defective policies to continue even though they were killing millions each year. The same can be said about the world's two contemporary famines, occurring right now in North Korea and Sudan.

Famines are often associated with what look like natural disasters, and commentators often settle for the simplicity of explaining famines by pointing to these events: the floods in China during the failed Great Leap Forward, the droughts in Ethiopia, or crop failures in North Korea. Nevertheless, many countries with similar natural problems, or even worse ones, manage perfectly well, because a responsive government intervenes to help alleviate hunger. Since the primary victims of a famine are the indigent, deaths can be prevented by recreating incomes (for example, through employment programs), which makes food accessible to potential famine victims. Even the poorest democratic countries that have faced terrible droughts or floods or other natural disasters (such as India in 1973, or Zimbabwe and Botswana in the early 1980s) have been able to feed their people without experiencing a famine.

Famines are easy to prevent if there is a serious effort to do so, and a democratic government, facing elections and criticisms from opposition parties and independent newspapers, cannot help but make such an effort. Not surprisingly, while India continued to have famines under British rule right up to independence (the last famine, which I witnessed as a child, was in 1943, four years before independence), they disappeared suddenly with the establishment of a multiparty democracy and a free press.

I have discussed these issues elsewhere, particularly in my joint work with Jean Drèze, so I will not dwell further on them here.[5] Indeed, the issue of famine is only one example of the reach of democracy, though it is, in many ways, the easiest case to analyze. The positive role of political and civil rights applies to the prevention of economic and social disasters in general. When things go fine and everything is routinely good, this instrumental role of democracy may not be particularly missed. It is when things get fouled up, for one reason or another, that the political incentives provided by democratic governance acquire great practical value.

There is, I believe, an important lesson here. Many economic technocrats recommend the use of economic incentives (which the market system provides) while ignoring political incentives (which democratic systems could guarantee). This is to opt for a deeply unbalanced set of ground rules. The protective power of democracy may not be missed much when a country is lucky enough to be facing no serious calamity, when everything is going quite smoothly. Yet the danger of insecurity, arising from changed economic or other circumstances, or from uncorrected mistakes of policy, can lurk behind what looks like a healthy state.

The recent problems of East and Southeast Asia bring out, among other things, the penalties of undemocratic governance. This is so in two striking respects. First, the development of the financial crisis in some of these economies (including South Korea, Thailand, Indonesia) has been closely linked to the lack of transparency in business, in particular the lack of public participation in reviewing financial arrangements. The absence of an effective democratic forum has been central to this failing. Second, once the financial crisis led to a general economic recession, the protective power of democracy—not unlike that which prevents famines in democratic countries—was badly missed in a country like Indonesia. The newly dispossessed did not have the hearing they needed.

A fall in total gross national product of, say, 10 percent may not look like much if it follows in the wake of a growth rate of 5 or 10 percent every year over the past few decades, and yet that decline can decimate lives and create misery for millions if the burden of contraction is not widely shared but allowed to be heaped on those—the unemployed or the economically redundant—who can least bear it. The vulnerable in Indonesia may not have missed democracy when things went up and up, but that lacuna kept their voice low and muffled as the unequally shared crisis developed. The protective role of democracy is strongly missed when it is most needed.

The Functions of Democracy

I have so far allowed the agenda of this essay to be determined by the critics of democracy, especially the economic critics. I shall return to criticisms again, taking up the arguments of the cultural critics in particular, but the time has come for me to pursue further the positive analysis of what democracy does and what may lie at the base of its claim to be a universal value.

What exactly is democracy? We must not identify democracy with majority rule. Democracy has complex demands, which certainly include voting and respect for election results, but it also requires the protection of liberties and freedom, respect for legal entitlements, and the guaranteeing of free discussion and uncensored distribution of news and fair comment. Even elections can be deeply defective if they occur without the different sides getting an adequate opportunity to present their respective cases, or without the electorate enjoying the freedom to obtain news and to consider the views of the competing protagonists. Democracy is a demanding system, and not just a mechanical condition (like majority rule) taken in isolation.

Viewed in this light, the merits of democracy and its claim as a universal value can be related to certain distinct virtues that go with its unfettered practice. Indeed, we can distinguish three different ways in which democracy enriches the lives of the citizens. First, political freedom is a part of human freedom in general, and exercising civil and political rights is a crucial part of good lives of individuals as social beings. Political and social participation has *intrinsic value* for human life and well-being. To be prevented from participation in the political life of the community is a major deprivation.

Second, as I have just discussed (in disputing the claim that democracy is in tension with economic development), democracy has an important *instrumental value* in enhancing the hearing that people get in expressing and supporting their claims to political attention (including claims of economic needs). Third—and this is a point to be explored further—the practice of democracy gives citizens an opportunity to learn from one another, and helps society to form its values and priorities. Even the idea of "needs," including the understanding of "economic needs," requires public

Democracy is a demanding system, and not just a mechanical condition (like majority rule) taken in isolation.

discussion and exchange of information, views, and analyses. In this sense, democracy has *constructive importance,* in addition to its intrinsic value for the lives of the citizens and its instrumental importance in political decisions. The claims of democracy as a universal value have to take note of this diversity of considerations.

The conceptualization—even comprehension—of what are to count as "needs," including "economic needs," may itself require the exercise of political and civil rights. A proper understanding of what economic needs are—their content and their force—may require discussion and exchange. Political and civil rights, especially those related to the guaranteeing of open discussion, debate, criticism, and dissent, are central to the process of generating informed and considered choices. These processes are crucial to the formation of values and priorities, and we cannot, in general, take preferences as given independently of public discussion, that is, irrespective of whether open interchange and debate are permitted or not.

In fact, the reach and effectiveness of open dialogue are often underestimated in assessing social and political problems. For example, public discussion has an important role to play in reducing the high rates of fertility that characterize many developing countries. There is substantial evidence that the sharp decline in fertility rates in India's more literate states has been much influenced by public discussion of the bad effects of high fertility rates on the community at large, and especially on the lives of young women. If the view has emerged in, say, the Indian state of Kerala or of Tamil Nadu that a happy family in the modern age is a small family, much discussion and debate have gone into the formation of these perspectives. Kerala now has a fertility rate of 1.7 (similar to that of Britain and France, and well below China's 1.9), and this has been achieved with no coercion, but mainly through the emergence of new values—a process in which political and social dialogue has played a major part. Kerala's high literacy rate (it ranks higher in literacy than any province in China), especially among women, has greatly contributed to making such social and political dialogue possible.

Miseries and deprivations can be of various kinds, some more amenable to social remedies than others. The totality of the human predicament would be a gross basis for identifying our "needs." For example, there are many things that we might have good reason to value and thus could be taken as "needs" if they were feasible. We could even want immortality, as Maitreyee, that remarkable inquiring mind in the *Upanishads,* famously did in her 3,000-year-old conversation with Yajnvalkya. But we do not see immortality as a "need" because it is clearly unfeasible. Our conception of needs relates to our ideas of the preventable nature of some deprivations and to our understanding of what can be done about them. In the formation of understandings and beliefs about feasibility (particularly, *social* feasibility), public discussions play a crucial role. Political rights, including freedom of expression and discussion, are not only pivotal in inducing social responses to economic needs, they are also central to the conceptualization of economic needs themselves.

Universality of Values

If the above analysis is correct, then democracy's claim to be valuable does not rest on just one particular merit. There is a plurality of virtues here, including, first, the *intrinsic* importance of political participation and freedom in human life; second, the *instrumental* importance of political incentives in keeping governments responsible and accountable; and third, the *constructive* role of democracy in the formation of values and in the understanding of needs, rights, and duties. In the light of this diagnosis, we may now address the motivating question of this essay, namely the case for seeing democracy as a universal value.

In disputing this claim, it is sometimes argued that not everyone agrees on the decisive importance of democracy, particularly when it competes with other desirable things for our attention and loyalty. This is indeed so, and there is no unanimity here. This lack of unanimity is seen by some as sufficient evidence that democracy is not a universal value.

Clearly, we must begin by dealing with a methodological question: What is a universal value? For a value to be considered universal, must it have the consent of everyone? If that were indeed necessary, then the category of universal values might well be empty. I know of no value—not even motherhood (I think of *Mommie Dearest*)—to which no one has ever objected. I would argue that universal consent is not required for something to be a universal value. Rather, the claim of a universal value is that people anywhere may have reason to see it as valuable.

When Mahatma Gandhi argued for the universal value of nonviolence, he was not arguing that people everywhere already acted according to this value, but rather that they had good reason to see it as valuable. Similarly, when Rabindranath Tagore argued for "the freedom of the mind" as a universal value, he was not saying that this claim is accepted by all, but that all do have reason enough to accept it—a reason that he did much to explore, present, and propagate.[6] Understood in this way, any claim that something is a universal value involves some counterfactual analysis—in particular, whether people might see some value in a claim that they have not yet considered adequately. All claims to universal value—not just that of democracy—have this implicit presumption.

I would argue that it is with regard to this often *implicit* presumption that the biggest attitudinal shift toward democracy has occurred in the 20th century. In considering democracy for a country that does not have it and where many people may not yet have had the opportunity to consider it for actual practice, it is now presumed that the people involved would approve of it once it becomes a reality in their lives. In the 19th century this assumption typically would have not been made, but the presumption that is taken to be natural (what I earlier called the "default" position) has changed radically during the 20th century.

It must also be noted that this change is, to a great extent, based on observing the history of the 20th century. As democracy has spread, its adherents have grown, not shrunk. Starting off from Europe and America, democracy as a system has reached very many distant shores, where it has been met with willing participation and acceptance. Moreover, when an existing democracy has been overthrown, there have been widespread protests, even though these protests have often been brutally suppressed. Many people have been willing to risk their lives in the fight to bring back democracy.

Some who dispute the status of democracy as a universal value base their argument not on the absence of unanimity, but on the presence of regional contrasts. These alleged contrasts are sometimes related to the poverty of some nations. According to this argument, poor people are interested, and have reason to be interested, in bread, not in democracy. This oft-repeated argument is fallacious at two different levels.

First, as discussed above, the protective role of democracy may be particularly important for the poor. This obviously applies to potential famine victims who face starvation. It also applies to the destitute thrown off the economic ladder in a financial crisis. People in economic need also need a political voice. Democracy is not a luxury that can await the arrival of general prosperity.

Second, there is very little evidence that poor people, given the choice, prefer to reject democracy. It is thus of some interest to note that when an erstwhile Indian government in the mid-1970s tried out a similar argument to justify the alleged "emergency" (and the suppression of various political and civil rights) that it had declared, an election was called that divided the voters precisely on this issue. In that fateful election, fought largely on this one overriding theme, the suppression of basic political and civil rights was firmly rejected, and the Indian electorate—one of the poorest in the world—showed itself to be no less keen on protesting against the denial of basic liberties and rights than on complaining about economic deprivation.

To the extent that there has been any testing of the proposition that the poor do not care about civil and political rights, the evidence is entirely against that claim. Similar points can be made by observing the struggle for democratic freedoms in South Korea, Thailand, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Burma, Indonesia, and elsewhere in Asia. Similarly, while political freedom is widely denied in Africa, there have been movements and protests against such repression whenever circumstances have permitted them.

The Argument from Cultural Differences

There is also another argument in defense of an allegedly fundamental regional contrast, one related not to economic circumstances but to cultural differences. Perhaps the most famous of these claims relates to what have been called "Asian values." It has been claimed that Asians traditionally value discipline, not political freedom, and thus the attitude to democracy must inevitably be much more skeptical in these countries. I have discussed this thesis in some detail in my Morganthau Memorial Lecture at the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs.[7]

It is very hard to find any real basis for this intellectual claim in the history of Asian cultures, especially if we look at the classical traditions of India, the Middle East, Iran, and other parts of Asia. For example, one of the earliest and most emphatic statements advocating the tolerance of pluralism and the duty of the state to protect minorities can be found in the inscriptions of the Indian emperor Ashoka in the third century B.C.

Asia is, of course, a very large area, containing 60 percent of the world's population, and generalizations about such a vast set of peoples is not easy. Sometimes the advocates of "Asian values" have tended to look primarily at East Asia as the region of particular applicability. The general thesis of a contrast between the West and Asia often concentrates on the lands to the east of Thailand, even though there is also a more ambitious claim that the rest of Asia is rather "similar." Lee Kuan Yew, to whom we must be grateful for being such a clear expositor (and for articulating fully what is often stated vaguely in this tangled literature), outlines "the fundamental difference between Western

(Continued on page 50)

THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY: 2000

BY ADRIAN KARATNYCKY

IN A year when freedom did not make dramatic further strides in the world, it is important to remember that—despite fits and starts—human liberty has been on an upward trajectory throughout the 20th century. When viewed from the perspective of the century as a whole, democracy has made important and dramatic progress.

A look at the political maps of the world in 1900, 1950, and 2000 reveals monumental shifts in the number and nature of sovereign polities. At the beginning of the 20th century, there were 55 sovereign polities, 55 entities that were governed by colonial and imperial systems, and 20 protectorates under the sway or protection of foreign powers. No polity enjoyed competitive multiparty politics with universal suffrage, essential characteristics of an electoral democracy. A mere 12.4 percent of mankind lived under a form of government that could be deemed somewhat democratic, although suffrage was generally limited to males. In the United States, women could not vote, and the voting rights of racial minorities and the poor were restricted. Twenty-four other countries with some form of democratic government maintained similarly restrictive democratic practices, denying voting rights to women, racial minorities, and those without property. By contrast, 55.8 percent of the world's population lived under some form of monarchy (with 36.6 percent of the global population under absolute monarchic rule), and an additional 30.2 percent lived under colonial and imperial domination.

By 1950, the number of sovereign polities had risen to 80. With colonialism on the decline, the number of entities still under colonial and imperial rule had fallen to 43, while 31 entities remained protectorates, many of them former colonies making the transition to independence. In the aftermath of World War II, there was also a significant expansion in the number of democratically elected governments. In 1950, 22 democratic states accounted for 31 percent of the world's population. Countries with restrictive democratic practices (that is, countries with systems in which a single party exercised long-term political dominance and the role of opposition parties was limited [for example, the Philippines and Cuba in 1950] and countries in which women or ethnic minorities were excluded from the electoral process [for example, Colombia and Switzerland in 1950])

ILLUSTRATED BY BOBBI PRATTE

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accounted for a further 11.9 percent of the world population. The middle of the 20th century also witnessed the spread of totalitarian communism as an alternative form of government, under which a third of the world's population then lived.

By the end of the 20th century, sovereignty and electoral democracy both registered dramatic gains. The number of sovereign states more than doubled, from 80 in 1950 to 192 in 1999 (which includes the international protectorates of East Timor and Bosnia-Herzegovina). The end of the century has also seen the virtual elimination of colonial and imperial rule. Today, 58.2 percent of the world's population lives under democratically elected leadership, while another 5 percent resides in states with restricted democratic practices (such as Malaysia, where the ruling party enjoys overwhelming electoral advantages and systematically works to suppress political space for opposition parties, and Mexico, whose parliament was elected in a democratic process but whose presidential election of 1994 was conducted in a less than free and fair fashion). In sum, electoral democracies constitute 120 of the 192 internationally recognized independent polities. Indeed the idea of national sovereignty has generally been accompanied by the idea of personal sovereignty within a democratically accountable state.

The trend toward democratically elected government has been accompanied by a trend toward broader political freedom and enhanced civil liberties. The adoption in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights helped spark a growing global awareness of human freedom. Central to the spread of this awareness has been the ongoing revolution in communications technology, which has decentralized state control of information and allowed for its cheaper and more rapid dissemination.

Freedom House's end-of-century survey of *Freedom in the World* finds that 85 of the world's 192 countries (44 percent) are Free, meaning that these countries maintain a high degree of political and economic freedom and respect basic civil liberties. This figure represented a drop of three from last year. Another 59 countries (31 percent of all states) were rated as Partly Free, enjoying more limited political rights and civil liberties, often in a context of corruption, weak rule of law, ethnic strife, or civil war. This represented an increase of six from the previous year. Finally, 48 countries (25 percent of all states) that deny their citizens basic rights and civil liberties were rated as Not Free, a decrease of two from the previous year. In all, 38.9 percent of the world's population currently lives in Free countries, 25.3 percent lives in Partly Free states, and 35.8 percent lives in countries that are Not Free.

A closer look at the dynamics of political change in 1999 helps to give some definition to the broader trends. Two of the world's most populous developing countries, Indonesia and Nigeria, both made transitions to electoral democracy and improved their freedom scores (while remaining within the "Partly Free" category). Fiji entered the ranks of Free countries as a consequence of an improved political environment, which included the holding of successful elections within the framework of new, fairer electoral laws. Progress was also registered in Djibouti, which advanced from Not Free to Partly Free status as a result of the free and fair outcome of presidential elections held in April 1999 and the subsequent release of some 40 political prisoners. East Timor, which is currently a UN protectorate, saw its status improve from Not Free to Partly Free as a result of the end of violence by Indonesian military, security, and paramilitary forces. In Niger, which also advanced from Not Free to Partly Free status, free and fair presidential elections were held in November 1999, following a referendum that returned the country to democratic rule. Togo advanced from Not Free to Partly Free as a result of more open political discourse signaled by the return from exile of one of the country's main opposition leaders. With the end of Slobodan Milošević's terror campaign in Kosovo and the establishment of a United Nations protectorate in that territory, Yugoslavia saw the resurgence of independent civic life, a vibrant opposition print media, and local television that broadcast opposition views. These factors raised Yugoslavia's rating from Not Free

Freedom in the World

Freedom in the World is an evaluation of political rights and civil liberties in the world that Freedom House has provided on an annual basis since 1973. (Established in New York in 1941, Freedom House is a nonprofit organization that monitors political rights and civil liberties around the world.) The survey assesses a country's freedom by examining its record in these two areas: A country grants its citizens *political rights* when it permits them to form political parties that represent a significant range of voter choice and whose leaders can openly compete for and be elected to positions of power in government. A country upholds its citizens' *civil liberties* when it respects and protects their religious, ethnic, economic, linguistic, and other rights, including gender and family rights, personal freedoms, and freedoms of the press, belief, and association. The survey rates each country on a seven-point scale for both political rights and civil liberties (1 representing the most free and 7 the least free) and then divides the world into three broad categories: "Free" (countries whose ratings average 1-3); "Partly Free" (countries whose ratings average 3-5.5); and "Not Free" (countries whose ratings average 5.5-7).

The ratings are not merely assessments of the conduct of governments. Rather, they are intended to reflect the reality of daily life. Thus a country with a benign government facing violent forces (for example, terrorist movements or insurgencies) hostile to an open society will be graded on the basis of the on-the-ground conditions that determine whether the population is able to exercise its freedoms. The survey enables scholars and policymakers both to assess the direction of global change annually and to examine trends in freedom over time and on a comparative basis across regions with different political and economic systems.

By the end of the 20th century, sovereignty and electoral democracy both registered dramatic gains. The number of sovereign states more than doubled, from 80 in 1950 to 192 in 1999.

to Partly Free.

Venezuela exited the ranks of Free countries and is now rated Partly Free, in large measure due to the authoritarian actions of its new president, Hugo Chávez. He restricted the power of the democratically elected congress, created what amounts to a parallel government of military cronies, and further eroded the country's system of checks and balances by effectively ending judicial independence. Nicaragua's rating dropped from Free to Partly Free because what appear to be trumped-up charges were filed against the country's comptroller general, who was vigorously investigating serious allegations of high-level corruption. Honduras declined from Free to Partly Free, as the elected civilian government faced serious challenges of military insubordination. Malawi also declined to Partly Free status as a result of political violence accompanying the June presidential elections that targeted Muslims in a stronghold of an opposition candidate.

Two states declined from Partly Free to Not Free status in 1999. The biggest setback for democracy occurred in Pakistan, where the military toppled an ineffective elected government that had been losing popular legitimacy due to rising political corruption and violence. Eritrea also exited the ranks of Partly Free states and is now Not Free, as a result of the government's hostile attitude toward independent civil society and its increasing restriction of opposition political parties, which has effectively put an end to any semblance of a multiparty system. Eritrea's move toward authoritarianism has been exacerbated by an ongoing war with Ethiopia.

The dramatic gains for freedom registered in the 1980s and earlier in the 1990s did not continue in 1999. Nevertheless, the survey's findings registered more significant upward than downward change by a margin of 27 to 18.

In all, 27 countries registered significant gains in freedom, either moving up to a higher category (Free or Partly Free) or improving their freedom scores (on a 1-to-7 scale for political rights and for civil liberties) while remaining within the same category. In addition to the six countries whose category rating improved (Djibouti, East Timor, Fiji, Niger, Togo, and Yugoslavia), 20 countries registered numerical gains signifying positive change. By contrast, six countries saw their freedom category rating drop to Partly Free or Not Free (Eritrea, Honduras, Malawi, Nicaragua, Pakistan, and Venezuela), and 12 other countries registered a decline in their freedom scores.

Most significantly, the Islamic world, long resistant to democratic change, is beginning to show signs of liberalization that include modest democratic reforms and, in several cases, growing democratic ferment.

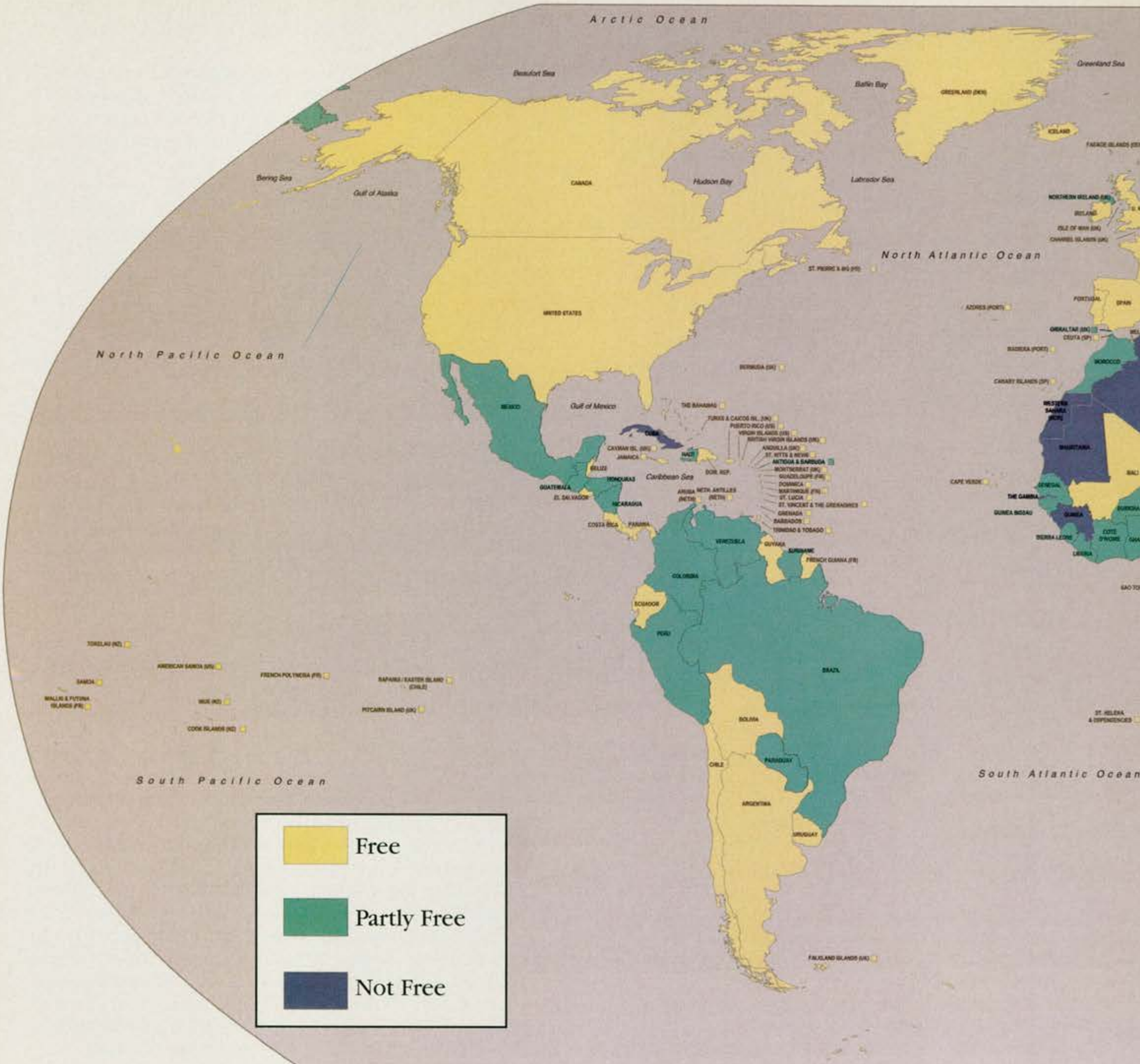
At the end of the century that witnessed the emergence of democracy as the preeminent form of government, there remained 47 states that denied their citizens a broad range of basic freedoms. Among these states, 13 have been given the survey's lowest rating of 7 for political rights and 7 for civil liberties. The 13 "worst-rated" countries represent a narrow range of systems and cultures. Three (Cuba, North Korea, and Vietnam) are one-party Marxist-Leninist regimes, and eight are majority Islamic countries (Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Turkmenistan). Of the latter, Turkmenistan is a postcommunist country; Iraq, Libya, and Syria are led by secular Ba'athist or socialist parties; Afghanistan is a fundamentalist Islamic theocracy; Sudan is led by a government that embraces fundamentalist Islamic rhetoric; and Saudi Arabia has made important concessions to conservative clerics. The remaining "worst-rated" countries are Burma and Equatorial Guinea, both tightly controlled military dictatorships. One "worst-rated" territory (Tibet) is under the jurisdiction of China's one-party communist rule; the other (Chechnya) is under brutal attack by Russia. More importantly, of the 13 "worst-rated" countries and the two "worst-rated" territories, all but two (Saudi Arabia and Equatorial Guinea) have experienced a significant period of one-party socialist rule in the last 15 years.

Regional Patterns

Democracy and freedom have been on the upswing since the mid-1970s. Few would dispute that this trend has been visible across all continents and in most cultures, underscoring that human liberty and democracy are not Western constructs but universal aspirations. Yet while the expansion of democracy and freedom has been global, it has not everywhere proceeded at the same pace. There have been important geographical and cultural variations that deserve attention and deeper understanding.

At the dawn of the new millennium, democracy and freedom are the dominant trends in Western and East-Central Europe, in the Americas, and increasingly in

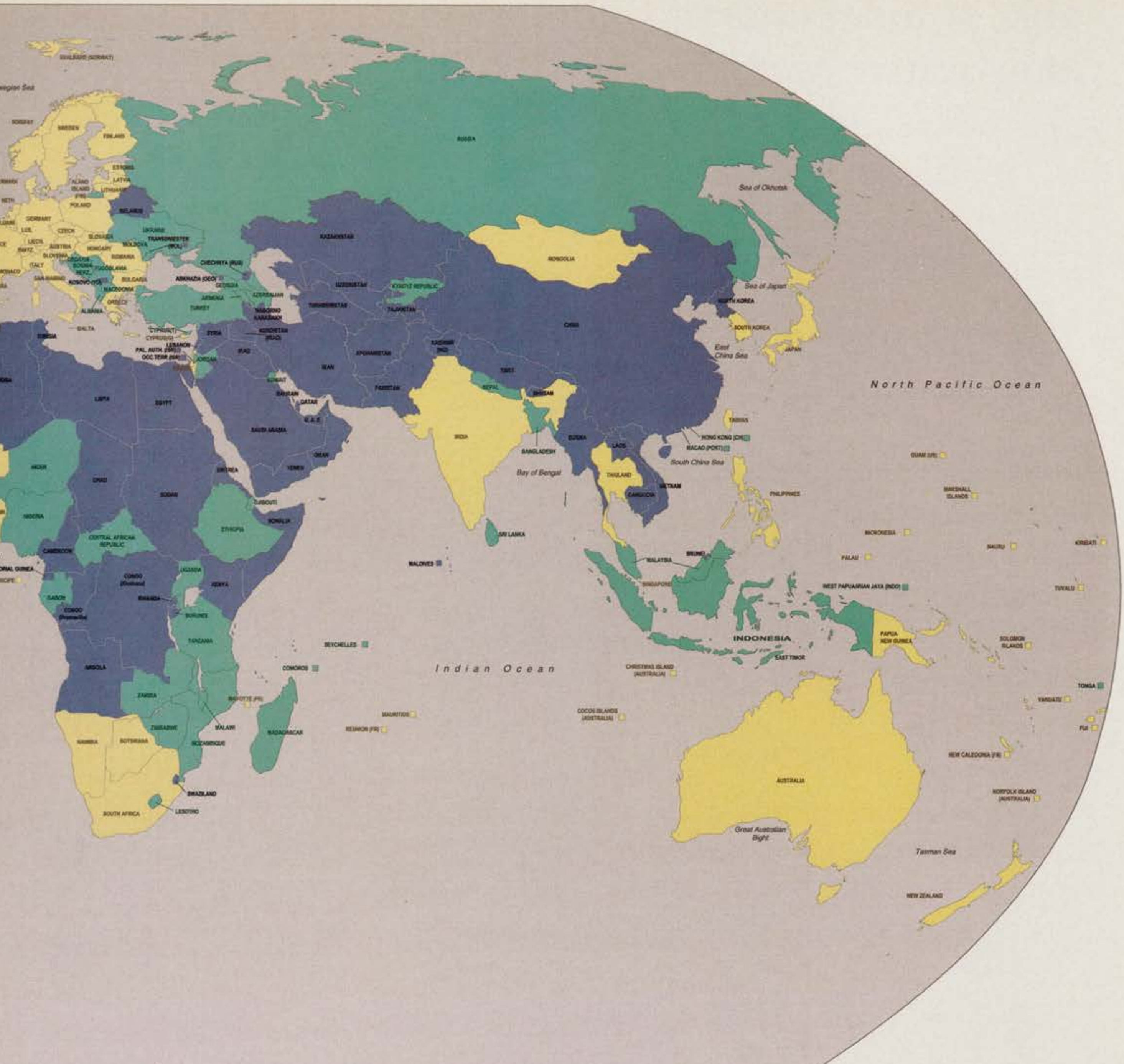
(Text continues on page 30)



The Map of F

The Map of Freedom reflects the findings of Freedom House's 1999-2000 survey *Freedom in the World*. *Freedom in the World* is an annual institutional effort that monitors the gains and losses for political rights and civil liberties in 192 nations and 60 related and disputed territories. For each country, the Survey provides a concise report on political and human rights developments, along with ratings of political rights and civil liberties. Based on these ratings, countries are divided into three categories: Free, Partly Free, and Not Free, as reflected in the Map of Freedom.

In Free countries, citizens enjoy a high degree of political and civil freedom. Partly Free countries are characterized by some restrictions on political rights and civil liberties, often in the context of corruption, weak rule of law, ethnic strife, or civil war. In Not Free countries, the political process is tightly controlled and basic freedoms are denied.



reedom 2000

In 2000, there are 2.324 billion people living in Free societies, representing 38.90 percent of the world's population. There are 1.529 billion people living in Partly Free societies, representing 25.58 percent of the world's population. There are 2.122 billion people living in Not Free societies, representing 35.51 percent of the world's population.

This map is available as a 20" x 30" poster; contact Freedom House at 202/296-5101, or e-mail fh@freedomhouse.org.

Table of Independent Countries: Comparative Measures of Freedom

TREND ARROW	COUNTRY	POLITICAL RIGHTS	CIVIL LIBERTIES	FREEDOM RATING
	Afghanistan	7	7	Not Free
	Albania	4	5	Partly Free
	Algeria	6	5	Not Free
	Andorra	1	1	Free
↓	Angola	6	6	Not Free
	Antigua and Barbuda	4	3	Partly Free
	Argentina	2 ▲	3	Free
	Armenia	4	4	Partly Free
	Australia	1	1	Free
	Austria	1	1	Free
	Azerbaijan	6	4	Partly Free
	Bahamas	1	1 ▲	Free
	Bahrain	7	6	Not Free
	Bangladesh	3 ▼	4	Partly Free
	Barbados	1	1	Free
↓	Belarus	6	6	Not Free
	Belgium	1	2	Free
	Belize	1	1	Free
	Benin	2	3 ▼	Free
	Bhutan	7	6	Not Free
↓	Bolivia	1	3	Free
↓	Bosnia-Herzegovina	5	5	Partly Free
	Botswana	2	2	Free
↓	Brazil	3	4	Partly Free
	Brunei	7	5	Not Free
	Bulgaria	2	3	Free
	Burkina Faso	4 ▲	4	Partly Free
	Burma	7	7	Not Free
	Burundi	6 ▲	6	Not Free
	Cambodia	6	6	Not Free
	Cameroon	7	6 ▼	Not Free
	Canada	1	1	Free
	Cape Verde	1	2	Free
↑	Central African Republic	3	4	Partly Free
	Chad	6	5 ▼	Not Free
	Chile	2 ▲	2	Free
	China (PRC)	7	6	Not Free
	Colombia	4 ▼	4	Partly Free
	Comoros	6 ▼	4	Partly Free
	Congo (Brazzaville)	6 ▲	5	Not Free
	Congo (Kinshasa)	7	6	Not Free
↓	Costa Rica	1	2	Free
	Cote D'Ivoire	6	4	Partly Free
	Croatia	4	4	Partly Free
	Cuba	7	7	Not Free
	Cyprus (Greek)	1	1	Free
	Czech Republic	1	2	Free
	Denmark	1	1	Free

TREND ARROW	COUNTRY	POLITICAL RIGHTS	CIVIL LIBERTIES	FREEDOM RATING
	Djibouti	4 ▲	6	Partly Free
	Dominica	1	1	Free
↓	Dominican Republic	2	3	Free
	East Timor	6 ▲	4 ▲	Partly Free
↓	Ecuador	2	3	Free
	Egypt	6	5 ▲	Not Free
	El Salvador	2	3	Free
	Equatorial Guinea	7	7	Not Free
	Eritrea	7 ▼	5 ▼	Not Free
	Estonia	1	2	Free
	Ethiopia	5 ▼	5 ▼	Partly Free
	Fiji	2 ▲	3	Free
	Finland	1	1	Free
	France	1	2	Free
	Gabon	5	4	Partly Free
	The Gambia	7	5	Not Free
	Georgia	3	4	Partly Free
	Germany	1	2	Free
	Ghana	3	3	Partly Free
	Greece	1	3	Free
	Grenada	1	2	Free
	Guatemala	3	4	Partly Free
	Guinea	6	5	Not Free
↑	Guinea-Bissau	3	5	Partly Free
	Guyana	2	2	Free
	Haiti	5	5	Partly Free
	Honduras	3 ▼	3	Partly Free
	Hungary	1	2	Free
	Iceland	1	1	Free
	India	2	3	Free
	Indonesia	4 ▲	4	Partly Free
	Iran	6	6	Not Free
	Iraq	7	7	Not Free
	Ireland	1	1	Free
	Israel	1	2 ▲	Free
	Italy	1	2	Free
	Jamaica	2	2	Free
	Japan	1	2	Free
	Jordan	4	4 ▲	Partly Free
	Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free
	Kenya	6	5	Not Free
	Kiribati	1	1	Free
	Korea, North	7	7	Not Free
	Korea, South	2	2	Free
	Kuwait	4 ▲	5	Partly Free
	Kyrgyz Republic	5	5	Partly Free
	Laos	7	6	Not Free
	Latvia	1	2	Free
	Lebanon	6	5	Not Free
	Lesotho	4	4	Partly Free
	Liberia	4	5	Partly Free

TREND ARROW	COUNTRY	POLITICAL RIGHTS	CIVIL LIBERTIES	FREEDOM RATING
	Libya	7	7	Not Free
	Liechtenstein	1	1	Free
	Lithuania	1	2	Free
	Luxembourg	1	1	Free
↓	Macedonia	3	3	Partly Free
	Madagascar	2	4	Partly Free
	Malawi	3 ▼	3	Partly Free
	Malaysia	5	5	Partly Free
	Maldives	6	5	Not Free
	Mali	3	3	Free
	Malta	1	1	Free
	Marshall Islands	1	1	Free
	Mauritania	6	5	Not Free
	Mauritius	1	2	Free
↑	Mexico	3	4	Partly Free
	Micronesia	1	2	Free
	Moldova	2	4	Partly Free
	Monaco	2	1	Free
↑	Mongolia	2	3	Free
↑	Morocco	5	4	Partly Free
	Mozambique	3	4	Partly Free
	Namibia	2	3	Free
	Nauru	1	3	Free
	Nepal	3	4	Partly Free
	Netherlands	1	1	Free
	New Zealand	1	1	Free
	Nicaragua	3 ▼	3	Partly Free
	Niger	5 ▲	5	Partly Free
	Nigeria	4 ▲	3 ▲	Partly Free
	Norway	1	1	Free
	Oman	6	6	Not Free
	Pakistan	7 ▼	5	Not Free
	Palau	1	2	Free
	Panama	1 ▲	2 ▲	Free
	Papua New Guinea	2	3	Free
	Paraguay	4	3	Partly Free
	Peru	5	4	Partly Free
	Philippines	2	3	Free
	Poland	1	2	Free
	Portugal	1	1	Free
	Qatar	6 ▲	6	Not Free
	Romania	2	2	Free
	Russia	4	5 ▼	Partly Free
	Rwanda	7	6	Not Free
	St. Kitts and Nevis	1	2	Free
	St. Lucia	1	2	Free
	St. Vincent and Grenadines	2	1	Free
	Samoa	2	2 ▲	Free
	San Marino	1	1	Free
	Sao Tome and Principe	1	2	Free
	Saudi Arabia	7	7	Not Free

TREND ARROW	COUNTRY	POLITICAL RIGHTS	CIVIL LIBERTIES	FREEDOM RATING
↑	Senegal	4	4	Partly Free
	Seychelles	3	3	Partly Free
↑	Sierre Leone	3	5	Partly Free
	Singapore	5	5	Partly Free
	Slovakia	1 ▲	2	Free
	Slovenia	1	2	Free
	Solomon Islands	1	2	Free
	Somalia	7	7	Not Free
	South Africa	1	2	Free
	Spain	1	2	Free
	Sri Lanka	3	4	Partly Free
	Sudan	7	7	Not Free
	Suriname	3	3	Partly Free
	Swaziland	6	5 ▼	Not Free
	Sweden	1	1	Free
	Switzerland	1	1	Free
	Syria	7	7	Not Free
	Taiwan (Rep. of China)	2	2	Free
	Tajikistan	6	6	Not Free
	Tanzania	4 ▲	4	Partly Free
	Thailand	2	3	Free
	Togo	5 ▲	5	Partly Free
	Tonga	5	3	Partly Free
	Trinidad and Tobago	1	2	Free
	Tunisia	6	5	Not Free
	Turkey	4	5	Partly Free
	Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free
	Tuvalu	1	1	Free
	Uganda	5 ▼	5 ▼	Partly Free
↓	Ukraine	3	4	Partly Free
	United Arab Emirates	6	5	Not Free
	United Kingdom*	1	2	Free
	United States	1	1	Free
	Uruguay	1	2	Free
↓	Uzbekistan	7	6	Not Free
	Vanuatu	1	3	Free
	Venezuela	4 ▼	4 ▼	Partly Free
	Vietnam	7	7	Not Free
	Yemen	5	6	Not Free
	Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)	5 ▲	5 ▲	Partly Free
	Zambia	5	4	Partly Free
	Zimbabwe	6 ▼	5	Partly Free

1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating.

↑ ↓ up or down indicates a general trend in freedom.

▲ ▼ up or down indicates a change in political rights or civil liberties since the last *Survey*.

* excluding Northern Ireland

The Freedom Rating is an overall judgment based on survey results. See the sidebar on page 24 for more details on the *Survey* methodology.

(Continued from page 25)

the Asia-Pacific region. In the former Soviet Union, the picture remains mixed, with freedom's further expansion stalled and a number of countries becoming increasingly authoritarian. In Africa, Free societies and electoral democracies remain a distinct minority. While there are no democracies or Free states within the Arab world, and there is a low proportion of Free and democratic states in other predominantly Muslim societies, 1999 was a year of democratic ferment in the Islamic world.

Of the 53 countries in Africa, eight are Free (15 percent), 25 are Partly Free (47 percent), and 20 are Not Free (38 percent). With democratic elections in Djibouti, Niger, and Nigeria, 20 African countries (38 percent) are electoral democracies. At the end of 1999, Malawi dropped from Free to Partly Free and Eritrea from Partly Free to Not Free, while Djibouti, Niger, and Togo rose from Not Free to Partly Free. The survey also records significant improvement (but without a category change) in Nigeria, more modest progress in Burkina Faso, Burundi, and Tanzania, and modest declines in freedom in Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

In the Asia-Pacific region, nine of the 26 larger countries are Free (35 percent), seven are Partly Free (27 percent), and 10 are Not Free (38 percent). Despite the looming presence of communist China and the rhetoric of "Asian values," 14 (54 percent) of the region's polities are electoral democracies.

Of the 13 smaller Asia-Pacific island countries, 11 are Free, one (Tonga) is Partly Free, and one (the Sultanate of Brunei) is Not Free. With the exception of Tonga and Brunei, the other 11 island-countries are electoral democracies.

In East-Central Europe and the former USSR, there are growing signs of a deepening chasm. In Central Europe and parts of Eastern Europe, including the Baltic states, democracy and freedom prevail; in the former USSR, however, progress toward the emergence of open societies has stalled or failed. Overall, 19 of the 27 postcommunist countries of East-Central Europe and the former USSR are electoral democracies. Ten of the region's states are Free, 12 are Partly Free, and five are Not Free. However, all of the Not Free states are from the former USSR; with the exception of the Baltic States, none of the former Soviet Republics is Free. Stagnation and reversals for freedom characterized virtually all the non-Baltic Soviet states. Russia's war in Chechnya resumed with a brutal vengeance and has been accompanied by the growing influence of representatives from the security services in the upper echelons of power. Belarus's dictatorship under the erratic tyrant Alyaksandr Lukashenka remained Eastern Europe's most repressive state. A modest revival of civic opposition activity in Yugoslavia resulted in that country's improved freedom status.

Western Europe remains the preserve of Free coun-

Freedom House on the Web

Founded in 1941, Freedom House counts among its early leaders Eleanor Roosevelt and Wendell Wilkie. Freedom House sponsors a variety of projects and publications devoted to the study and advocacy of freedom. It also conducts programs to build civil society, a free press, and human rights in a number of countries abroad.

Freedom House is best known for its surveys of freedom. In most cases, these surveys are conducted annually, and are used widely by scholars, teachers, government officials, and journalists.

These surveys can be accessed on the Freedom House Web site. They are available in their entirety and can be downloaded and used for teaching purposes.

The Freedom House Web address is **www.freedomhouse.org.** Freedom House currently publishes three major freedom surveys:

Freedom in the World: This is a comprehensive report on the state of freedom in every country in the world. The freedom survey has been published since 1973, and is widely used by scholars and government agencies. The survey is written in non-academic language that is easily accessible to students. The survey can be accessed by clicking on **www.freedomhouse.org/survey99.**

World Press Freedom Survey: The press freedom survey includes ratings for every country in the world. The most recent edition devotes special attention to the efforts of governments to censor access to the Internet. The press freedom survey can be accessed by clicking on **www.freedomhouse.org/pfs2000.**

Nations in Transit: The NIT is a comprehensive report on the condition of political, economic, and social reform in the post-communist world. It can be accessed by clicking on **www.freedomhouse.org/nit98.**

Freedom Maps: Freedom House publishes two multicolored maps on which are displayed the condition of world freedom—

- The Map of Freedom depicts the condition of political rights and civil liberties in each country
- The Map of Press Freedom indicates the condition of world press freedom.

The freedom maps are a useful visual tool for teaching about the state of freedom. They can be obtained by contacting Freedom House at 202/296-5101 or at its e-mail address: fh@freedomhouse.org.

tries and democracies, with all 24 states both Free and democratic.

Among the 35 countries in the Americas, 31 are electoral democracies (Mexico, Peru, Cuba, and Antigua and Barbuda are the exceptions). Twenty-two states are rated as Free, 12 are Partly Free, and one (Cuba) is Not Free. Negative trends produced a lower freedom rating for Honduras, Nicaragua and Venezuela, all of which declined from Free to Partly Free.

In the Middle East (excluding North Africa), the roots of democracy and freedom are the weakest. In this region, only one country is rated Free (Israel), three are rated Partly Free (Jordan, Kuwait, and Turkey) and 10 are Not Free. Israel and Turkey are the region's only two electoral democracies. Among the 16 states with an Arab majority in the Middle East and North Africa, there are no Free countries. Three predominantly Arab states—Jordan, Kuwait, and Morocco—are Partly Free. And while the year saw some evidence of modest democratic reforms in several Arab states, there remain no electoral democracies in the Arab world.

The survey continues to reveal interesting patterns in the relationship between cultures and political development. While there are broad differences within civilizations, and while democracy and human rights find expression in a wide array of cultures and beliefs, the survey shows some important variations in the relationship between religious belief or tradition and political freedom.

Of the 85 countries that are rated Free, 76 are majority Christian by tradition or belief. Of the nine Free countries that are not majority Christian, one is Israel, often considered part of a Judeo-Christian tradition, and two others, Mauritius and South Korea, have significant Christian communities representing at least a third of their population. Of the six remaining Free countries, Mali is predominantly Muslim; nearly half of Taiwan's population is Buddhist; Mongolia and Thailand are chiefly Buddhist; Japan has a majority that observes both Buddhist and Shinto traditions; and India is predominantly Hindu. Thirteen of the 63 countries with the poorest record in terms of political rights and civil liberties are predominantly Christian. By this indicator, a predominantly Christian country is more than five times as likely to be Free and democratic as it is to be repressive and nondemocratic. There is also a strong correlation between electoral democracy and Hinduism (India, Mauritius, and Nepal), and there is a significant number of Free countries among traditionally Buddhist societies and societies in which Buddhism is the most widespread faith (Japan, Mongolia, Taiwan, and Thailand).

The Islamic world remains most resistant to the spread of democracy and civil liberties, especially the Arab countries. Only one country with a Muslim majority (Mali) is Free, 14 are Partly Free, and 26 are Not Free. Eight of the 41 countries with a predominantly Muslim population—a net increase of two from last year—are electoral democracies: Albania, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Niger, and Turkey. Nevertheless, even as Pakistan exited this group, there were growing signs of political ferment and modest democratic reform in many Islamic countries.

The 13 Worst Rated Countries

Afghanistan	Saudi Arabia
Burma	Somalia
Cuba	Sudan
Equatorial Guinea	Syria
Iraq	Turkmenistan
North Korea	Vietnam
Libya	

The 2 Worst Rated Disputed Territories

Chechnya (Russia)	Tibet (China)

In Indonesia, the world's most populous Islamic country, and in Nigeria, where it is estimated that roughly half the population is Muslim, political openings resulted in competitive democratic elections and an orderly transfer of power. Similarly, predominantly Muslim Djibouti and Niger held free and fair elections. Significantly, these four countries represent nearly one-quarter of the world's Muslims. If we factor in the Muslims living in the electoral democracies of Europe, the Americas, and India, a majority of the world's Muslims (roughly 600 million out of 1.15 billion) live under democratically elected governments.

Democratic ferment has also become a major current in the political life of Iran. The year saw a major struggle pitting civil society (which includes an active student movement) and pro-reform members of the government against government hard-line conservatives and unofficial paramilitary groups supporting them. President Khatami, a cleric who was elected in 1997 on a platform of moderate liberalization, declared in 1999: "A lively and democratic human society is one which thinks, one which is free, one which is based on the rule of law, and one which criticizes."

A major engine for the spread of the ideas of openness and democratic practices is the Al-Jazeera satellite television station, which broadcasts from Qatar and is viewed throughout the Arab world. Al-Jazeera offers news and commentary programs that include theological debates and appearances by political dissidents and exiles from across the region. In Qatar, which remains an extremely conservative society but where the emir is a major proponent of liberalization, 1999 saw the advent of elections based on universal suffrage to municipal councils with limited powers.

Yemen held its first direct presidential election in September 1999. Onerous restrictions kept the candidate of the major opposition Yemen Socialist Party from qualifying for the ballot, but the country nevertheless conducted a vote based on universal suffrage. In Morocco, positive trends included increased tolerance for opposition parties and the return of some political exiles to the country. In Jordan, a restrictive press law was relaxed and municipal elections were held in which opposition parties, including one linked

(Continued on page 49)

Summertime... and Reading Beckons

The students have dispersed, the report cards are long now in the mail, the last faculty meeting has concluded: It is summer. For most teachers, other responsibilities and summer jobs quickly move in to fill the space. But even the most burdened get some vacation. And for all of us, there is something about the season—ingrained most likely during childhood when summer carried a magical aura of endless time—that gives a sense of respite: time away from the usual routine; rest; a chance for the mind and body to wander. And in our heads we've been carrying around that list of books we haven't had time for. All that is required is the wherewithal to ward off that nagging little voice that calls us from reading to attend to life's perennial chores. Should I be drifting off with a book when the grass needs mowing, the closets are still a clutter, and the health insurance forms are piling up? The quotes, notes, and anecdotes that follow answer that question. The mind and spirit need time to replenish themselves. Other things will, at least for a while, have to take a lesser place in line.

The items that follow are taken from The Delights of Reading,* *a bountiful collection assembled from a lifetime of fond association with books and reading by Otto L. Bettmann. Forced to leave his post as a rare-book librarian at the State Library in Berlin after Hitler's rise, Dr. Bettmann relocated in the United States in 1935 and founded the famous Bettmann Archive in New York.* The Delights of Reading, *as Daniel J. Boorstein notes in his foreword to the book, "offers us the opportunity to share the delight of eloquent, ironic, witty people of all sorts and from all ages." Enjoy... and keep reading!* —*Editor*

Every man who knows how to read has it in his power to magnify himself, to multiply the ways in which he exists, to make his life full, significant, and interesting.

—*Aldous Huxley*

You can practice the art of empathy in all the novels of Jane Austen and it is this daily practice that we all need, or we will never be good at living, as without practice we will never be good at playing the piano.

—*Fay Weldon*

Reading—the best state yet to keep absolute loneliness at bay.

—*William Styron*

Your family sees you as a lazy lump lying on the couch, propping a book up on your stomach, never realizing that you are really in the midst of an African safari that has just been charged by elephants, or in the drawing room of a large English country house interrogating the butler about the body discovered on the Aubusson carpet.

Reading is an escape, an education, a delving into the brain of another human being on such an intimate level that every nuance of thought, every snapping of synapse, every slippery desire of the author is laid open before you like, well, a book.

—*Cynthia Heimel*

Books are the carriers of civilization. Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill. They are engines of change,windows on the world, "lighthouses" (as a poet said) "erected in the sea of time."

—*Barbara W. Tuchman*

We have preserved the Book, and the Book has preserved us.

—*David Ben-Gurion*

I knew a gentleman who was so good a manager of his time that he would not even lose that small portion of it which the calls of nature obliged him to pass in the necessary-house; but gradually went through all the Latin poets in those moments.

—*Lord Chesterfield*

When Sir Robert Walpole was dismissed from all his employments he retired to Houghton and walked into the library. Pulling down a book and holding it some minutes to his eyes, he burst into tears. "I

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ILLUSTRATED BY DAN SHERBO

have led a life of business so long," said he, "that I have lost my taste for reading; and now—what shall I do?"

—*The Oxford Book of Literary Anecdotes*

I cannot think of a greater blessing than to die in one's own bed, without warning or discomfort, on the last page of the new book that we most wanted to read.

—*John Russell*

Very young children eat their books, literally devouring their contents. This is one reason for the scarcity of first editions of *Alice in Wonderland* and other favorites of the nursery.

—*A.S.W. Rosenbach*

Abraham Lincoln:
"The things I want to know are in books. My best friend is the man who will get me a book I ain't read" ...Since early youth he was possessed by a passion for books and borrowed any he could lay his hands on "in a radius of fifty miles." He kept with him even when working in the field some books to read during periods of rest.... When he traveled over the circuit, he often carried with him a volume of Shakespeare to read during spare moments.

—*M.L. Houser*

Harry Truman was one of our most bookish presidents. "Ken McCormick of Doubleday remembers going up to see him at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel after Truman had left the White House. He arrived early in the morning and the President wasn't up yet, but Mrs. Truman said, 'Go right into his bedroom—he'd love to see you, Ken.' So Ken walked in, and there was the President, the former President, sitting in a big chair with two stacks of new books on either side of his chair. Ken said, 'Mr. President, as a publisher, I'm so pleased to see that you're buying all those books. I suppose you read yourself to sleep at night.' He said, 'No, young man, I read myself awake.'"

—*David McCullough*

Instead of going to Paris to attend lectures, go to the public library, and you won't come out for twenty years, if you really wish to learn.

—*Leo Tolstoy*

If truth is not to be found in the British Museum...where is truth?

—*Virginia Woolf*

The owner of a country house was showing some visitors his superb library. "Do you ever lend books?" he was asked. "No," he replied promptly, "only fools lend books." Then, waving his hand to a many shelved section filled with handsomely bound volumes, he added, "All those books once belonged to fools."

—*Holbrook Jackson*

Our journalism forces us to take an interest in some fresh triviality every day, whereas only three or four books in a lifetime give us anything that is of importance.

—*Marcel Proust*

There is no frigate like a book
To take us lands away,
Nor any coursers like a page
Of prancing poetry.

—*Emily Dickinson*

G.K. Chesterton was once asked what books he would most like to have with him if he were stranded on a desert island. *"Thomas's Guide to Practical Shipbuilding,"* he replied.

Every burned book enlightens the world.

—*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Thomas Paine, "the rebellious staymaker," had arrived in America in 1774, a self-educated and penniless Quaker. He wrote *Common Sense* after the battle of Lexington to prove that independence and a republican government were feasible. His stirring tract, *The Crisis,* was written by firelight while serving under General Washington. Looking back, Paine reflected, "It was the cause of America that made me an author."

—*Bernard Smith*

God wrote it...I took his dictation.

—*Harriet Beecher Stowe*

THE SHAPE OF THE BOOK

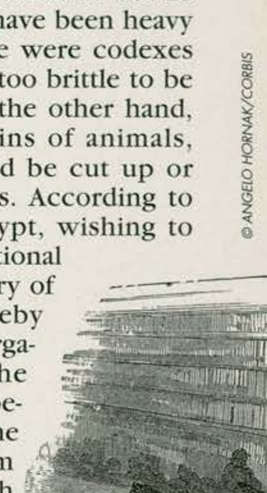
BY ALBERTO MANGUEL

MY HANDS, choosing a book to take to bed or to the reading desk, for the train or for a gift, consider the form as much as the content. Depending on the occasion, depending on the place where I've chosen to read, I prefer something small and cozy or ample and substantial. Books declare themselves through their titles, their authors, their places in a catalog or on a bookshelf, the illustrations on their jackets; books also declare themselves through their size. At different times and in different places I have come to expect certain books to look a certain way, and, as in all fashions, these changing features fix a precise quality onto a book's definition. I judge a book by its cover; I judge a book by its shape.

From the very beginning, readers demanded books in formats adapted to their intended use. The early Mesopotamian tablets were usually square but sometimes oblong pads of clay, approximately 3 inches across, and could be held comfortably in the hand. A book consisted of several such tablets, kept perhaps in a leather pouch or box, so that a reader could pick up tablet after tablet in a predetermined order. It is possible that the Mesopotamians also had books bound in much the same way as our volumes; neo-Hittite funerary stone monuments depict some objects resembling codexes—perhaps a series of tablets bound together inside a cover—but no such book has come down to us.

Not all Mesopotamian books were meant to be held in the hand. There exist texts written on much larger surfaces, such as the Middle Assyrian Code of Laws, found in Ashur and dating from the 12th century B.C., which measures 67 square feet and carries its text in columns on both sides.[1] Obviously this "book" was not meant to be handled, but to be erected and consulted as a work of reference. In this case, size must also have carried a hierarchic significance; a small tablet might suggest a private transaction; a book of laws in such a large format surely added, in the eyes of the Mesopotamian reader, to the authority of the laws themselves.

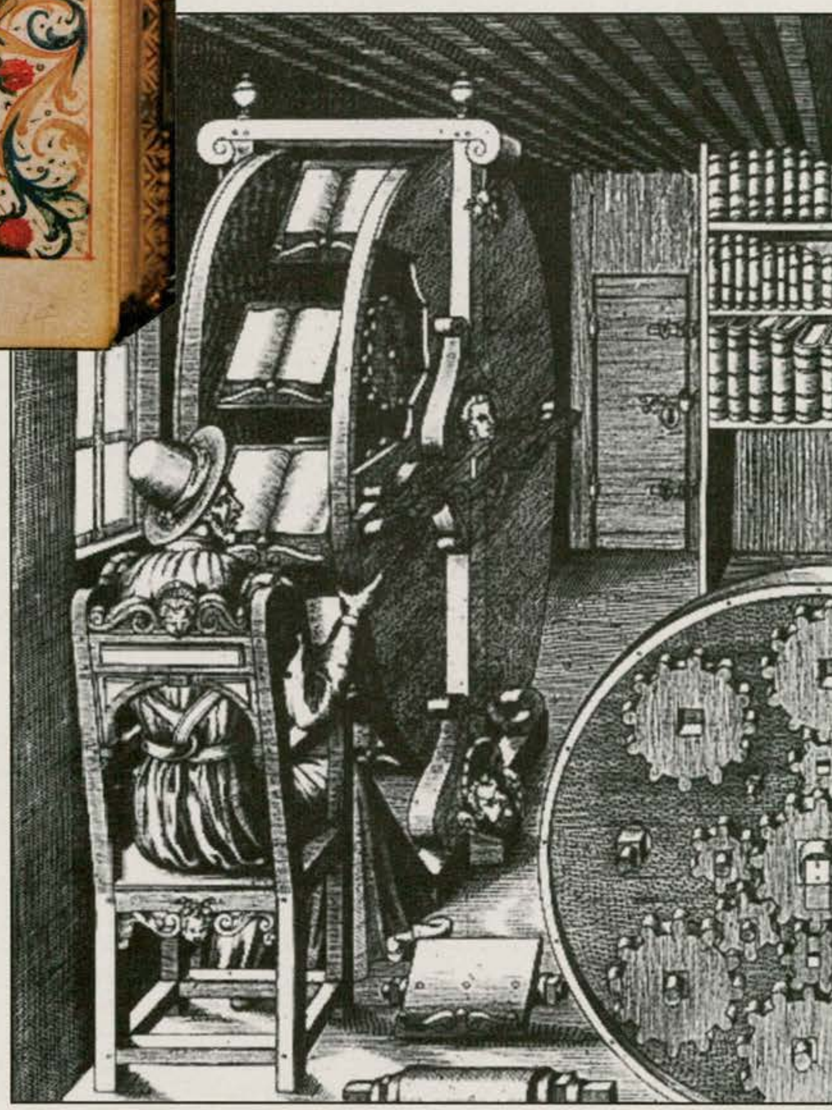
Of course, whatever a reader might have desired, the format of a book was limited. Clay was convenient for manufacturing tablets, and papyrus (the dried and split stems of a reed-like plant) could be made into manageable scrolls; both were relatively portable. But neither was suitable for the form of book that superseded tablet and scroll: the codex, or sheaf of bound pages. A codex of clay tablets would have been heavy and cumbersome, and although there were codexes made of papyrus pages, papyrus was too brittle to be folded into booklets. Parchment, on the other hand, or vellum (both made from the skins of animals, through different procedures), could be cut up or folded into all sorts of different sizes. According to Pliny the Elder, King Ptolemy of Egypt, wishing to keep the production of papyrus a national secret in order to favor his own Library of Alexandria, forbade its export, thereby forcing his rival, Eumenes, ruler of Pergamum, to find a new material for the books in his library.[2] If Pliny is to be believed, King Ptolemy's edict led to the invention of parchment in Pergamum in the second century B.C., although the earliest parchment booklets known to us today date from a century earlier.[3] These materials were not used exclusively for one kind of book: There were scrolls made out of parchment and, as we have said, codexes made out of papyrus; but these were rare and impractical. By the fourth century, and until the appearance of paper in Italy eight centuries later, parchment was the preferred material throughout Europe for the making of books. Not only was it sturdier and smoother than papyrus, it was also cheaper, since a reader who demanded books written on papyrus (notwithstanding King Ptolemy's edict) would have had to import the material from Egypt at considerable cost.



Alberto Manguel is a Canadian writer, translator, and editor. This essay is taken from his book A History of Reading. *Copyright © Alberto Manguel 1989, 2000.*

At left: Illuminated manuscript.
Below left: A Gustave Doré caricature satirizing the new European fad for large-sized books.
Below: A clever reading-machine from the 1588 edition of Diverse et Artificiose Machine.

MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY



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The parchment codex quickly became the common form of books for officials and priests, travelers and students—in fact for all those who needed to transport their reading material conveniently from one place to another, and to consult any section of the text with ease. Furthermore, both sides of the leaf could hold text, and the four margins of a codex page made it easier to include glosses and commentaries, allowing the reader a hand in the story—a participation that was far more difficult when reading from a scroll. The organization of the texts themselves, which had previously been divided according to the capacity of a scroll (in the case of Homer's *Iliad,* for instance, the division of the poem into 24 books probably resulted from the fact that it normally occupied 24 scrolls), was changed. The text could now be organized according to its contents, in books or chapters, or could become itself a component when several shorter works were conveniently collected under a single handy cover. The unwieldy scroll possessed a limited surface—a disadvantage we are keenly aware of today, having returned to this ancient book form on our computer screens, which reveal only a portion of text at a time as we "scroll" upwards or downwards. The codex, on the other hand, allowed the reader to flip almost instantly to other pages, and thereby retain a sense of the whole—a sense compounded by the fact that the entire text was usually held in the reader's hands throughout the reading. The codex had other extraordinary merits: Originally intended to be transported with ease, and therefore necessarily small, it grew in both size and number of pages, becoming, if not limitless, at least much vaster than any previous book. The first-century poet Martial wondered at the magical powers of an object small enough to fit in the hand and yet containing an infinity of marvels:

> Homer on parchment pages!
> The *Iliad* and all the adventures
> Of Ulysses, foe of Priam's kingdom!
> All locked within a piece of skin
> Folded into several little sheets![4]

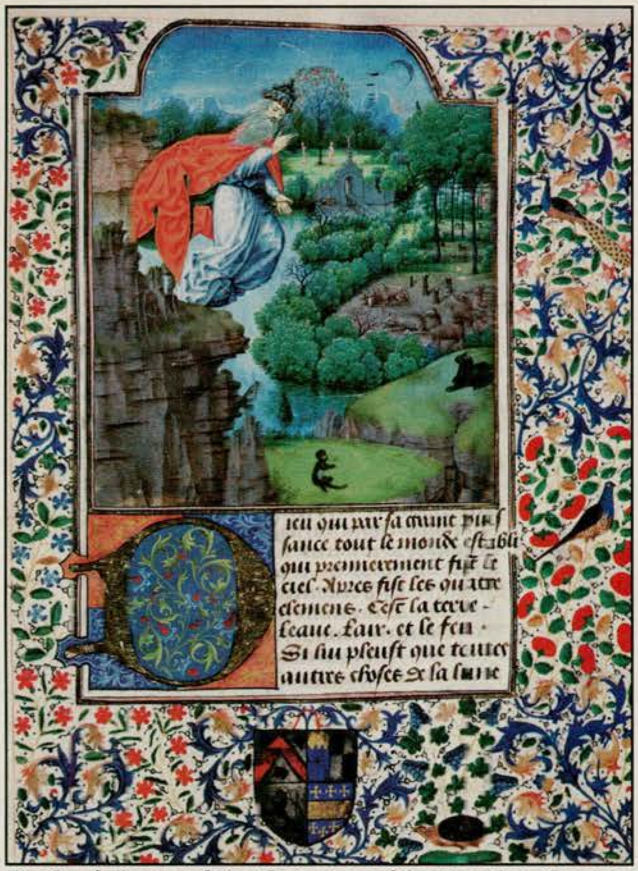
The codex's advantages prevailed: By A.D. 400, the classical scroll had been all but abandoned, and most books were being produced as gathered leaves in a rectangular format. Folded once, the parchment became a folio; folded twice, a quarto; folded once again, an octavo. By the 16th century, the formats of the folded sheets had become official: In France, in 1527, François I decreed standard paper sizes throughout his kingdom; anyone breaking this rule was thrown into prison.[5]

Of all the shapes that books have acquired through the ages, the most popular have been those that allowed the book to be held comfortably in the reader's hand. Even in Greece and Rome, where scrolls were normally used for all kinds of texts, private missives were usually written on small, hand-held reusable wax tablets, protected by raised edges and decorated covers. In time, the tablets gave way to a few gathered leaves of fine parchment, sometimes of different colors, for the purpose of jotting down quick notes or doing sums. In Rome, towards the third century A.D., these booklets lost their practical value and became prized instead for the look of their covers. Bound in finely decorated flats of ivory, they were offered as gifts to high officials on their nomination to office; eventually they became private gifts as well, and wealthy citizens began giving each other booklets in which they would inscribe a poem or dedication. Soon, enterprising booksellers started manufacturing small collections of poems in this manner—little gift books whose merit lay less in the contents than in the elaborate embellishments.[6]

Since much of the life of Europeans in the Middle Ages was spent in religious offices, it is hardly surprising that one of the most popular books of the time was the personal prayer book, or Book of Hours, which was commonly represented in depictions of the Annunciation. Usually handwritten or printed in a small format, in many cases illuminated with exquisite richness by master artists, it contained a collection of short services known as "the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary," recited at various times of the night and day.[7] Modeled on the Divine Office—the fuller services said daily by the clergy—the Little Office comprised Psalms and other passages from the Scriptures, as well as hymns, the Office of the Dead, special prayers to the saints, and a calendar. These small volumes were eminently portable tools of devotion which the faithful could use either in public church services or in private prayers. Their size made them suitable for children; around 1493, the Duke Gian Galeazzo Sforza of Milan had a Book of Hours designed for his 3-year-old son, Francesco Maria Sforza, "Il Duchetto," depicted on one of the pages as being led by a guardian angel through a night-time wilderness.

In the same way that small volumes served specific purposes, large volumes met other readers' demands. Around the fifth century, the Catholic Church began producing huge service books—missals, chorales, antiphonaries—which, displayed on a lectern in the middle of the choir, allowed readers to follow the words or musical notes with as much ease as if they were reading a monumental inscription. There is a beautiful antiphonary in the Abbey Library of St. Gall, containing a selection of liturgical texts in lettering so large that it can be read at a fair distance, to the cadence of melodic chants, by choirs of up to 20 singers;[8] standing several feet back from it, I can make out the notes with absolute clarity, and I wish my own reference books could be consulted with such ease from afar. Some of these service books were so immense that they had to be laid on rollers so they could be moved. But they were moved very rarely. Decorated with brass or ivory, protected with corners of metal, closed by gigantic clasps, they were books to be read communally and at a distance, disallowing any intimate perusal or sense of personal possession.

CRAFTING A book, whether the elephantine volumes chained to the lecterns or the dainty booklets made for a child's hand, was a long, laborious process. A change that took place in mid-15th century Europe not only reduced the number of working hours needed to produce a book, but dramatically increased the output of books, altering forever the reader's relationship to what was no longer an exclusive and



Book of Hours of the Countess of Bretiandos: Creation of the World (16th century)

unique object crafted by the hands of a scribe. The change, of course, was the invention of printing.

Sometime in the 1440s, a young engraver and gem cutter from the Archbishopric of Mainz, whose full name was Johannes Gensfleisch zur Laden zum Gutenberg (which the practicalities of the business world trimmed down to Johann Gutenberg), realized that much could be gained in speed and efficiency if the letters of the alphabet were cut in the form of reusable type rather than as the woodcut blocks which were then being used occasionally for printing illustrations. Gutenberg experimented over several years, borrowing large sums of money to finance his enterprise. He succeeded in devising all the essentials of printing as they were employed until the 20th century; metal prisms for molding the faces of the letters, a press that combined features of those used in winemaking and bookbinding, and an oil-based ink—none of which had previously existed.[9] Finally, between 1450 and 1455, Gutenberg produced a Bible with 42 lines to each page—the first book ever printed from type[10]—and took the printed pages with him to the Frankfurt Trade Fair. By an extraordinary stroke of luck, we have a letter from a certain Enea Silvio Piccolomini to the Cardinal of Carvajal, dated March 12, 1455, in Wiener Neustadt, telling His Eminence that he has seen Gutenberg's Bible at the fair:

> I did not see any complete Bibles, but I did see a certain number of five-page booklets [signatures] of several of the books of the Bible, with very clear and very proper lettering, and without any faults, which Your Eminence would have been able to read effortlessly with no glasses. Various witnesses told me that 158 copies had been completed, while others say there were 180. I am not certain of the quantity, but about the books' completion, if people can be trusted, I have no doubts whatsoever. Had I known your wishes, I would certainly have bought a copy. Several of these five-page booklets were sent to the Emperor himself. I shall try, as far as possible, to have one of these Bibles delivered for sale and I will purchase one copy for you. But I am afraid that this may not be possible, both because of the distance and because, so they say, even before the books were finished, there were customers ready to buy them.[11]

The effects of Gutenberg's invention were immediate and extraordinarily far-reaching, for almost at once many readers realized its great advantages: speed, uniformity of texts and relative cheapness.[12] Barely a few years after the first Bible had been printed, printing presses were set up all over Europe: in 1465 in Italy, 1470 in France, 1472 in Spain, 1475 in Holland and England, 1489 in Denmark. (Printing took longer to reach the New World: the first presses were established in 1533 in Mexico City and in 1638 in Cambridge, Massachusetts.) It has been calculated that more than 30,000 *incunabula* (a 17th-century Latin word meaning "related to the cradle" and used to describe books printed before 1500) were produced on these presses.[13] Considering that 15th-century print runs were usually of fewer than 250 copies and hardly ever reached 1,000, Gutenberg's feat must be seen as prodigious.[14] Suddenly, for the first time since the invention of writing, it was possible to produce reading material quickly and in vast quantities.

It may be useful to bear in mind that printing did not, in spite of the obvious "end-of-the-world" predictions, eradicate the taste for handwritten text. On the contrary, Gutenberg and his followers attempted to emulate the scribe's craft, and most *incunabula* have a manuscript appearance. At the end of the 15th century, even though printing was by then well established, care for the elegant hand had not died out, and some of the most memorable examples of calligraphy still lay in the future. While books were becoming more easily available and more people were learning to read, more were also learning to write, often stylishly and with great distinction, and the 16th century became not only the age of the printed word but also the century of the great manuals of handwriting.[15] It is interesting to note how often a technological development—such as Gutenberg's—promotes rather than eliminates that which it is supposed to supersede, making us aware of old-fashioned virtues we might otherwise have either overlooked or dismissed as of negligible importance. In our day, computer technology and the proliferation of books on CD-ROM have not affected—as far as statistics show—the production and sale of books in their old-fashioned codex form. Those who see computer development as the devil incarnate (as Sven Birkerts portrays it in his dramatically titled *Gutenberg Elegies*)[16] allow nostalgia to hold sway over experience. For example, 359,437 new books (not counting pamphlets, magazines, and periodicals) were added in 1995 to the already vast collections of the Library of Congress.

The sudden increase in book production after Gutenberg emphasized the relation between the contents of a book and its physical form. For instance, since Gutenberg's Bible was intended to imitate the expensive handmade volumes of the time, it was bought in gathered sheets and bound by its purchasers into large, imposing tomes—usually quartos measuring about 12 by 16 inches,[17] meant to be displayed on a lectern. A Bible of this size in vellum would have required the skins of more than 200 sheep ("a sure cure for insomnia," commented the antiquarian bookseller Alan G. Thomas).[18] But cheap and quick production led to a larger market of people who could afford copies to read privately, and who therefore did not require books in large type and format, and Gutenberg's successors eventually began producing smaller, pocketable volumes.

IN 1453 Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks, and many of the Greek scholars who had established schools on the shores of the Bosphorus left for Italy. Venice became the new center of classical learning. Some 40 years later the Italian humanist Aldus Manutius, who had instructed such brilliant students as Pico della Mirandola in Latin and Greek, finding it difficult to teach without scholarly editions of the classics in practical formats, decided to take up Gutenberg's craft and established a printing house of his own where he would be able to produce exactly the kind of books he needed for his courses. Aldus chose to establish his press in Venice in order to take advantage of the presence of the displaced Eastern scholars, and probably employed as correctors and compositors other exiles, Cretan refugees who had formerly been scribes.[19] In 1494 Aldus began his ambitious publishing program, which was to produce some of the most beautiful volumes in the history of printing: first in Greek—Sophocles, Aristotle, Plato, Thucydides—and then in Latin—Virgil, Horace, Ovid. In Aldus's view, these illustrious authors were to be read "without intermediaries"—in the original tongue, and mostly without annotations or glosses—and to make it possible for readers to "converse freely with the glorious dead" he published grammar books and dictionaries alongside the classical texts.[20] Not only did he seek the services of local experts, he also invited eminent humanists from all over Europe—including such luminaries as Erasmus of Rotterdam—to stay with him in Venice. Once a day these scholars would meet in Aldus's house to discuss what titles would be printed and what manuscripts would be used as reliable sources, sifting through the collections of classics established in the previous centuries. "Where medieval humanists accumulated," noted the historian Anthony Grafton, "Renaissance ones discriminated."[21] Aldus discriminated with an unerring eye. To the list of classical writers he added the works of the great Italian poets, Dante and Petrarch among others.

As private libraries grew, readers began to find large volumes not only difficult to handle and uncomfortable to carry, but inconvenient to store. In 1501, confident in the success of his first editions, Aldus responded to readers' demands and brought out a series of pocket-sized books in octavo—half the size of quarto—elegantly printed and meticulously edited. To keep down the production costs he decided to print a thousand copies at a time, and to use the page more economically he employed a newly designed type, "italic," created by the Bolognese punch-cutter Francesco Griffo, who also cut the first roman type in which the capitals were shorter than the ascending (full-height) letters of the lower case to ensure a better-balanced line. The result was a book that appeared much plainer than the ornate manuscript editions popular throughout the Middle Ages, a volume of elegant sobriety. What counted above all, for the owner of an Aldine pocket-book, was the text, clearly and eruditely printed—not a preciously decorated object. Griffo's italic type (first used in a woodcut illustrating a collection of letters of Saint Catherine of Siena, printed in 1500) gracefully drew the reader's attention to the delicate relationship between letters; according to the modern English critic Sir Francis Meynell, italics slowed down the reader's eye, "increasing his capacity to absorb the beauty of the text."[22]

Since these books were cheaper than manuscripts, especially illuminated ones, and since an identical replacement could be purchased if a copy was lost or damaged, they became, in the eyes of the new readers, less symbols of wealth than of intellectual aristocracy, and essential tools for study. Booksellers and stationers had produced, both in the days of ancient Rome and in the early Middle Ages, books as merchandise to be traded, but the cost and pace of their production weighed upon the readers with a sense of privilege in owning something unique. After Gutenberg, for the first time in history, hundreds of readers possessed identical copies of the same book, and (until a reader gave a volume private markings and a personal history) the book read by someone in Madrid was the same book read by someone in Montpellier. So successful was Aldus's enterprise that his editions were soon being imitated throughout Europe: in France by Gryphius in Lyons, as well as Colines and Robert Estienne in Paris, and in the Netherlands by Plantin in Antwerp and Elzevir in Leiden, the Hague, Utrecht, and Amsterdam. When Aldus died in 1515, the humanists who attended his funeral erected all around his coffin, like erudite sentinels, the books he had so lovingly chosen to print.

The example of Aldus and others like him set the standard for at least a hundred years of printing in Europe. But in the next couple of centuries the readers' demands once again changed. The numerous editions of books of every kind offered too large a choice; competition between publishers, which up to then had merely encouraged better editions and greater public interest, began producing books of vastly impoverished quality. By the mid-16th century, a reader would have been able to choose from well over 8 million printed books, "more perhaps than all the scribes of Europe had produced since Constantine founded his city in A.D. 330."[23] Obviously these changes were neither sudden nor all-pervasive, but in general, from the end of the 16th century, "publisher-booksellers were no longer concerned with patronizing the world of letters, but merely sought to publish books whose sale was guaranteed. The richest made their fortune on books with a guaranteed market, reprints of old best-sellers, traditional religious works and, above all, the Church Fathers."[24] Others cornered the school market

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At left: A Colonial hornbook. Below: Its 19th-century Nigerian counterpart.

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with glosses of scholarly lectures, grammar manuals, and sheets for hornbooks.

The hornbook, in use from the 16th to the 19th century, was generally the first book put in a student's hand. Very few have survived to our time. The hornbook consisted of a thin board of wood, usually oak, about 9 inches long and 5 or 6 inches wide, bearing a sheet on which were printed the alphabet, and sometimes the nine digits and the Lord's Prayer. It had a handle, and was covered in front by a transparent layer of horn to prevent it from becoming dirty; the board and the sheet of horn were then held together by a thin brass frame. Similar books, known as "prayer boards," were used in Nigeria in the 18th and 19th centuries to teach the Koran. They were made of polished wood, with a handle at the top; the verses were written on a sheet of paper pasted directly onto the board.[25]

Books one could slip into one's pocket; books in a companionable shape; books that the reader felt could be read in any number of places; books that would not be judged awkward outside a library or a cloister: These books appeared under all kinds of guises. Throughout the 17th century, hawkers sold little booklets and ballads (described in *The Winter's Tale* as suitable "for man, or woman, of all sizes")[26] which became known as chap-books[27] in the following century. The preferred size of popular books had been the octavo, since a single sheet could produce a booklet of 16 pages. In the 18th century, perhaps because readers now demanded fuller accounts of the events narrated in tales and ballads, the sheets were folded in 12 parts and the booklets were fattened to 24 paperback pages.[28] The classic series produced by Elzevir of Holland in this format achieved such popularity among less well-off readers that the snobbish Earl of Chesterfield was led to comment, "If you happen to have an Elzevir classic in your pocket, neither show it nor mention it."[29]

The pocket paperback as we now know it did not come into being until much later. The Victorian age, which saw the formation in England of the Publishers' Association, the Booksellers' Association, the first commercial agencies, the Society of Authors, the royalty system and the one-volume, six-shilling new novel, also witnessed the birth of the pocket-book series.[30] Large-format books, however, continued to encumber the shelves. In the 19th century, so many books were being published in huge formats that a Gustave Doré cartoon depicted a poor clerk at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris trying to move a single one of these huge tomes. Binding cloth replaced the costly leather (the English publisher Pickering was the first to use it, in his Diamond Classics of 1822) and, since the cloth could be printed upon, it was soon employed to carry advertising. The object that the reader now held in his hand—a popular novel or science manual in a comfortable octavo bound in blue cloth, sometimes protected with paper wrappers on which ads might also be printed—was very different from the morocco-bound volumes of the preceding century. Now the book was a less aristocratic object, less forbidding, less grand. It shared with the reader a certain middle-class elegance that was economical and yet pleasing—a style which the designer William Morris would turn into a popular industry but which ultimately—in Morris's case—became a new luxury: a style based on the conventional beauty of everyday things. (Morris in fact modeled his ideal book on one of Aldus's volumes.) In the new books which the mid-19th century reader expected, the measure of excellence was not rarity but an alliance of pleasure and sober practicality. Private libraries were now appearing in bed-sitters and semi-detached homes, and their books suited the social standing of the rest of the furnishings.

In 17th- and 18th-century Europe, it had been assumed that books were meant to be read indoors, within the secluding walls of a private or public library. Now publishers were producing books meant to be taken out into the open, books made specifically to travel. In 19th-century England, the newly leisured bourgeoisie and the expansion of the railway combined to create a sudden urge for long journeys, and literate travelers found that they required reading material of specific content and size. (A century later, my father was still making a distinction between the green leather-bound books of his library, which no one was allowed to remove from that sanctuary, and the "ordinary paperbacks" which he left to yellow and wither on the wicker table on the patio, and which I would sometimes rescue and bring into my room as if they were stray cats.)

In 1841, Christian Bernhard Tauchnitz of Leipzig had launched one of the most ambitious of all paperback series; at an average of one title a week it published more than 5,000 volumes in its first hundred years, bringing its circulation to somewhere between 50 million and 60 million copies. While the choice of titles was excellent, the production was not equal to their content. The books were squarish, set in tiny type, with identical typographical covers that appealed neither to the hand nor to the eye.[31]

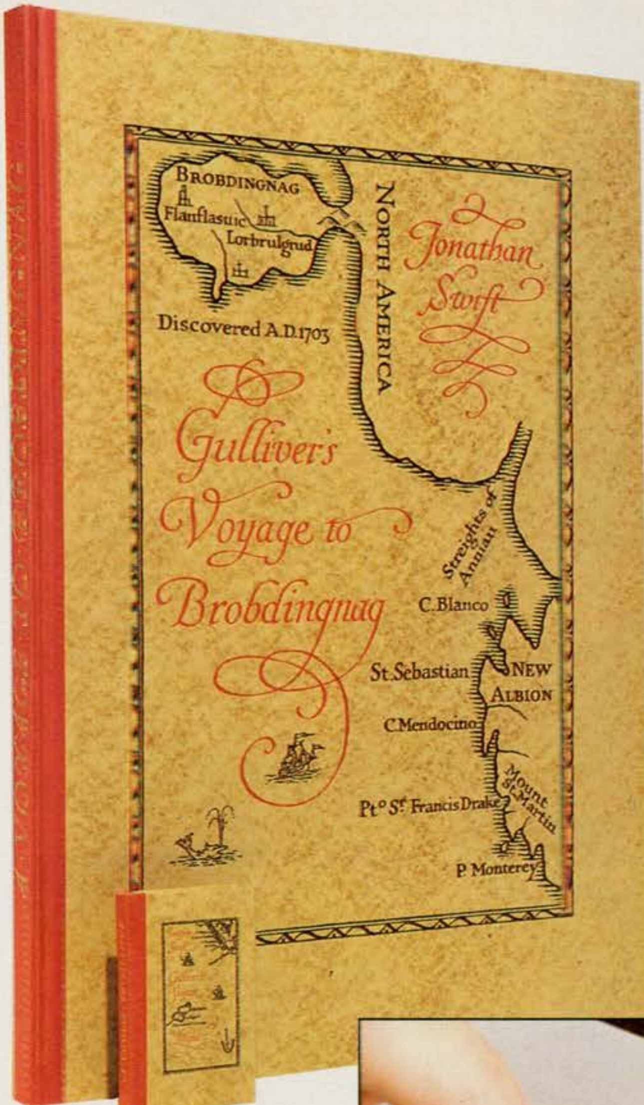
Seventeen years later, Reclam Publishers in Leipzig published a 12-volume edition of Shakespeare in translation. It was an immediate success, which Reclam followed by subdividing the edition into 25 little volumes of the plays in pink paper covers at the sensational price of one decimal pfennig each. All works by German writers dead for 30 years came into the public domain in 1867, and this allowed Reclam to continue the series under the title Universal-Bibliothek. The company began with Goethe's *Faust,* and continued with Gogol, Pushkin, Bjørnson, Ibsen, Plato, and Kant. In England, imitative reprint series of "the classics"—Nelson's New Century Library, Grant Richards's World's Classics, Collins's Pocket Classics, Dent's Everyman's Library—rivaled but did not overshadow the success of the Universal-Bibliothek,[32] which remained for years the standard paperback series.

Until 1935. One year earlier, after a weekend spent with Agatha Christie and her second husband in their house in Devon, the English publisher Allen Lane, waiting for his train back to London, looked through the bookstalls at the station for something to read. He found nothing that appealed to him among the popular magazines, the expensive hardbacks and the pulp fiction, and it occurred to him that what was needed was a line of cheap but good pocket-sized books. Back at The Bodley Head, where Lane worked with his two brothers, he put forward his scheme. They would publish a series of brightly colored paperback reprints of the best authors. They would not merely appeal to the common reader; they would tempt everyone who could read, highbrows and lowbrows alike. They would sell books not only in bookstores and bookstalls, but also at tea shops, stationers, and tobacconists.

The project met with contempt both from Lane's senior colleagues at The Bodley Head and from his fellow publishers, who had no interest in selling him reprint rights to their hardcover successes. Neither were booksellers enthusiastic, since their profits would be diminished and the books themselves "pocketed" in the reprehensible sense of the word. But Lane persevered, and in the end obtained permission to reprint several titles: two published already by The Bodley Head—André Maurois's *Ariel* and Agatha Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*—and others by such best-selling authors as Ernest Hemingway and Dorothy L. Sayers, plus a few by writers who are today less known, such as Susan Ertz and E.H. Young.

What Lane now needed was a name for his series, "not formidable like *World Classics,* not somehow patronizing like *Everyman.*"[33] The first choices were zoological: a dolphin, then a porpoise (already used by Faber & Faber) and finally a penguin. Penguin it was.

On July 30, 1935, the first 10 Penguins were launched at sixpence a volume. Lane had calculated that he would break even after 17,000 copies of each title were sold, but the first sales brought the number only to about 7,000. He went to see the buyer for the vast Woolworth general store chain, a Mr. Clifford Prescott, who demurred; the idea of selling books like any other merchandise, together with sets of socks



BEINECKE RARE BOOK AND MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, YALE UNIVERSITY

Above: Books as visual puns: a 1950 edition of Gulliver's Travels.
At right: The world's tiniest book, the 17th-century Enclosed Flower-Garden.

and tins of tea, seemed to him somehow ludicrous. By chance, at that very moment Mrs. Prescott entered her husband's office. Asked what she thought, she responded enthusiastically. Why not, she asked. Why should books not be treated as everyday objects, as necessary and as available as socks and tea? Thanks to Mrs. Prescott, the sale was made.

George Orwell summed up his reaction, both as reader and as author, to these newcomers. "In my capacity as reader," he wrote, "I applaud the Penguin Books; in my capacity as writer I pronounce them anathema. . . .The result may be a flood of cheap reprints which will cripple the lending libraries (the novelist's foster mother) and check the output of new novels. This would be a fine thing for literature, but a very bad thing for trade."[34] He was wrong. More than its specific qualities (its vast distribution, its low cost, the excellence and wide range of its titles), Penguin's greatest achievement was symbolic. The knowledge that such a huge range of literature could be bought by almost anyone almost anywhere, from Tunis to Tucumán, from the Cook Islands to Reykjavik (such are the fruits of British expansionism that I have bought and read a Penguin in all these places), lent readers a symbol of their own ubiquity.

The invention of new shapes for books is probably endless, and yet very few odd shapes survive. The heart-shaped book fashioned towards 1475 by a noble cleric, Jean de Montchenu, containing illuminated love lyrics; the minuscule booklet held in the right hand of a young Dutch woman of the mid-17th century painted by Bartholomeus van der Helst; the world's tiniest book, the *Bloemhofje* or *Enclosed Flower-Garden,* written in Holland in 1673 and measuring one-third inch by one-half inch, smaller than an ordinary postage stamp; John James Audubon's elephant-folio *Birds of America,* published between 1827 and 1838, leaving its author to die impoverished, alone and insane; the companion volumes of Brobdingnagian and Lilliputian sizes of *Gulliver's Travels* designed by Bruce Rogers for the Limited Editions Club of New York in 1950—none of these has lasted except as a curiosity. But the essential shapes—those which allow readers to feel the physical weight of knowledge, the splendor of vast illustrations or the pleasure of being able to carry a book along on a walk or into bed—those remain.

In the mid-1980s, an international group of North American archaeologists excavating the huge Dakhleh Oasis in the Sahara found, in the corner of a single-story addition to a fourth-century house, two complete books. One was an early manuscript of three political essays by the Athenian philosopher Isocrates; the other was a four-year record of the financial transactions of a local estate steward. This accounts book is the earliest complete example we have of a codex, or bound volume, and it is much like our paperbacks except for the fact that it is made not of paper but of wood. Each wooden leaf, 5 by 13 inches and one-sixteenth inch thick, is bored with four holes on the left side, to be bound with a cord in eight-leaved signatures. Since the accounts book was used over a span of four years, it had to be "robust, portable, easy to use, and durable."[35] That anonymous reader's requirements persist, with slight circumstantial variations, and agree with mine, 16 vertiginous centuries later. □

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(Continued from page 9)

dious work.)

To get a feel for unknowns in basic algebra, Armstrong advises, spatially endowed students in junior high school can draw a version of "x" as a masked outlaw. Students with musical intelligence can chant "x is a mystery" and "accompany their chanting with any available percussion instruments." To get a feel for Boyle's Law, high school chemistry students can become "molecules" of gas in a "container" (a clearly defined corner of the classroom). They move at a constant rate (temperature) and cannot leave the container (constant mass).

These activities are at once catchy, dreary, and desperate. This is not the way to learn about "x" or Boyle's Law. Animal sounds are not the best way for children to learn about punctuation. Teachers should not suffer theory that tells them they are. Don't have high school students ask Albert the classroom rabbit what he thinks about world hunger, as Armstrong's guide would suggest. Have them obtain research material from the Population Reference Bureau.

Sometimes, Zahorik noted in his study of how teachers make learning interesting, an activity may stir up interest but be educationally counterproductive. In Zahorik's chosen example, on a field trip to a nature center, students were asked to role-play various animals such as the "radar-eared grass nibbler" and the "long-legged fish nabber" while the teacher, wearing an official-looking costume, role-played the mayor of a hypothetical community. Using written clues suspended from trees, each "animal" was to find a home where it could survive. "Since natural environments with real plants and animals can provide considerable situational interest, the role-playing activity may not have been needed," Zahorik concluded with academic understatement.

At rock bottom, projects and activities provide mere entertainment. Teachers who fear student antagonism abandon "sedentary activities." They seek to fill dead time in the classroom. Projects and activities keep kids occupied and unmutinous. One of Zahorik's points was that "artificial tasks...detract from interest." But real knowledge needs no artificial tasks.

- Compare the tricky verbs, *être* and *avoir,* to their English cousins. Compare the Romanesque and the Gothic.

- Read a description of the French Revolution. Plenty exist, and they are not hard to find. Tell the story of the extraordinary flight from Paris of Louis XVI, a monarch who was ultimately tried, found guilty, and executed in one of the great and moving spectacles in all history. How is this revolution linked to the American Revolution and Constitution?

- Get to know the Carpetbaggers, the Know-Nothings, the Copperheads, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, William Jennings Bryan, Warren Harding, and Franklin Roosevelt.

Inherently fascinating subjects—how water gets from a reservoir to a kitchen sink, the locomotion of flatworms, the features of the solar system and what the names of each planet symbolize, the discovery of penicillin and the polio vaccine, why sad songs like the blues often use minor chords—are without limit. None of these subjects needs an artificial stimulus to make it come alive. Each brims with thrilling substance that lends itself to a memorable lesson in unadulterated form.

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PRODDED BY voters and elected officials who are seeking improved educational results, states are issuing detailed and in some cases ambitious content standards that seek to enlarge coverage and guarantee academic knowledge. Attention grows over what children should know, stimulated by widely held suspicions backed up by national data that too many of them know very little.

When done well, these new content standards are a positive and possibly historic development in American education. But the gurus are telling teachers to go somewhere else—and moreover, that the "narrow" knowledge embodied in new curriculum frameworks may bruise some children. Hence, teachers are undermined from the start. Well-intentioned teachers cannot realize these public expectations and at the same time abide the advice, theory, and recommendations that filter down to them from research university faculties and oracular educational institutes.

Balance is everything in education, and just as teachers should sometimes make judgments that land on the side of activity, they must also often act as experts and leaders. Teachers have to ask themselves: Is writing an eyewitness journal entry on "what it was like to witness the signing of the Declaration of Independence" really the best way for eighth-graders to learn the principles of the Declaration? Do we give up making that mural of the Underground Railroad in order to get a more in-depth understanding of the Civil War through reading the Emancipation Proclamation or memorizing the Gettysburg Address? Which is doable in a shorter amount of time, and which is more valuable?

In order to succeed, projects and activities take more planning, care, and work for teachers than standard lessons. In both successful and unsuccessful projects, teachers work very hard to make learning direct and lively. When successful, the inner satisfaction of developing the activity and fusing it to academic content drive teacher and student alike.

Teachers must define the scope, limit the things to be learned, and make sure students learn these things. If the subject is handled with planning and forethought, students will gain a sense of mastery from a project, not frustration.

In designing activities and projects teachers must ask: What do I want to accomplish by this? Is an activity the most effective and time-efficient way to achieve results? What evidence will stand to prove the desired end has been achieved? How is this project intended to advance what most or all students should know or be able to do?

Activities and projects work best when they are matched to the individual, stimulate intellectual growth in ways that the student cannot yet know, and build on knowledge that gives the endeavor depth and substance upon completion. Selection, arrangement, focus, presentation, practice, review—the mainstays of curriculum—must all be taken into account.

Education is not a game. The only valid architecture for projects and activities is core knowledge. How to handle words, express yourself fluently, and listen are not educational electives. No substitute exists for the foundations of mathematics, history, and science. Individual deliberation, judgment, understanding, and the ability to take advantage of the present depend on an individual's storehouse of these fundamental facts and skills. They are the armature, skeleton, and building blocks on which continuing education depends.

Facts and academic mastery are what too many activities artfully dodge. What civilizations have considered the keys to and the superstructure of knowledge, contemporary progressives label lower-order skills. At their most debased, projects and activities are the curriculum of Nietzsche's Last People, who see the wonders of the world, a world formalized in the humanities and science—and can only blink. □

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rests: Human knowledge, wisdom, and goodness can always be increased, and self-discipline is required to sustain the effort to improve.

Students should be encouraged to replace the attitude "Being myself makes self-discipline unnecessary" with *"The great challenge in life is not being but becoming, which requires self-discipline."*

To help students discover the desirability of this change, have them list at least 10 activities people undertake to improve themselves—for example, going on a diet, starting a bodybuilding program, learning to play a musical instrument. Next, for each of the activities they listed have them answer the following questions and then discuss their answers in class: Does this activity require effort? Are people sometimes tempted to miss a session? Does missing one session increase the tendency to miss others? Does forcing oneself to attend all sessions increase the chance of reaching the final goal?

* * *

"If I have high self-esteem I will be successful"

Long before this became a prominent attitude of many young people, it was embraced by the psychological community. Since the early 1960s, psychologists have regarded self-esteem as the indispensable ingredient in mental health: People who possessed it were bound to succeed; those who did not could expect failure or even more dire consequences. According to one well-known psychologist, *"whenever the keys to self-esteem are seemingly out of reach for a large percentage of the people, as in 20th-century America, then widespread 'mental illness,' neuroticism, hatred, alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, and social disorder will certainly occur"* (Dobson, 1974, pp. 12-13, emphasis his). Researchers who shared this view claimed to find connections between low self-esteem and gang violence, domestic abuse, terrorism, armed robbery, murder, hate crimes, and child abuse (reported in Baumeister, Smart, and Boden, 1996).

To ensure that children would not suffer these consequences, schools initiated programs to build students' self-esteem, assuming that they were promoting academic excellence in the process. In many cases the approaches constituted an extravagant departure from traditional pedagogy: Academic standards were often lowered for fear that students' egos were too fragile for occasional failures, and self-affirming activities, such as the chanting of "I'm special," "I am beautiful," and "I believe in me," were instituted. Business and personal development seminars adopted a similar approach: One sales trainer advised his clients to flood their minds with sentences like "I'm smart," "I'm graceful," "I'm talented," and—presto!—they'd have those qualities (quoted in McGarvey, 1990).

Although millions of people continue to believe that high self-esteem is unqualifiedly good and low self-esteem is dangerous, research contradicts this view. In one National Institute of Mental Health study aimed at establishing a relationship between low self-esteem and juvenile delinquency, the researchers found that "the effects of self-esteem on delinquent behavior is negligible" and added that "given the extensive speculation and debate about self-esteem and delinquency, we find these results something of an embarrassment" (quoted in Bobgan and Bobgan, 1987, p. 60).

Similarly, a scholarly review of close to 200 research studies on the relationship between self-esteem and violence produced some surprises. If the prevailing wisdom were correct, the reviewers reasoned, then women should commit more violent crimes than men because their self-esteem tends to be lower; rapists, juvenile delinquents, gang members, and psychopaths would be expected to have unusually low self-esteem, black men should have been more violent than white men during the days of slavery; and the only way a normal person could be made to torture others would be to have his or her self-esteem stripped away. However, in each case the authors found that the evidence documented the *opposite*. Women are less violent than men. Rapists, juvenile delinquents, gang members, and psychopaths have high self-esteem. Black men were considerably less violent than white men during the days of slavery. And the actual training of torturers (lamentably still pursued in some places) consists of *increasing* their self-esteem and sense of superiority. But what of all those studies, mentioned earlier, that purportedly found a correlation between low self-esteem and various kinds of violence? On close examination, the authors found, those studies were far too heavy on assertion and much too light on evidence (Baumeister, Smart, and Boden, 1996).

From this review of the research literature, Baumeister, Smart, and Boden reached a number of conclusions: that people with favorable opinions of themselves have a greater desire for self-enhancement and a greater sensitivity to criticism than those with low self-esteem; that aggression, crime, and violence are not caused by low self-esteem but by "threatened egotism"; and that egotism is most likely to be threatened when people make "unrealistically positive self-appraisals." They recommend that the therapy for such people should consist, not of building self-esteem, as they already feel superior to other people, but of "cultivating self-control" and "instilling modesty and humility."

Stanton Samenow, an expert on criminal behavior, shares this perspective. He has found that rapists, kidnappers, and child molesters generally do not have a negative self-image; they see themselves as decent human beings. They commit crimes not because they don't know the law, or because they can't tell right from wrong, but because they decide that they are exceptions to the law and the moral code. A criminal, Samenow explains (1984), "believes he is entitled to whatever he desires, and he will pursue it ruthlessly...[He] does not regard himself as obligated to anyone and rarely justifies his actions to himself. The justifications come later and only when he has to defend himself to others."

Educational research has produced almost identical findings. A group of University of California scholars, many of them *favorably* disposed to self-esteem theory, reviewed the research on self-esteem and found, in the words of sociologist Neil Smelser, "the associations between self-esteem and its expected consequences are mixed, insignificant, or absent" (Kohn, 1994, p. 274). In an international study assessing both math competency and self-image about math performance, Koreans scored highest in proficiency but lowest in self-image. Americans, on the other hand, scored lowest in proficiency but highest in self-image (LaPointe, Mean, and Philips, 1989). Purdue University researchers compared the problem-solving performance of low self-esteem and high self-esteem individuals and found that "the higher the self-esteem, the poorer the performance" (McCormack, 1981).

These conclusions should come as no great surprise. They were conventional wisdom for centuries before self-esteem theory was conceived. Socrates' choice of imperatives—"know thyself" rather than "esteem thyself"—implies his understanding that in the absence of self-knowledge there can be no reasonable assessment of whether esteem is deserved. And Samuel Johnson, the famous 18th-century lexicographer, wrote:

> Such is the consequence of too high an opinion of our own powers and knowledge; it makes us in youth negligent, and in age useless; it teaches us too soon to be satisfied with our attainments; or it makes our attainments unpleasing, unpopular, and ineffectual; it neither suffers us to learn, nor to teach; but withholds us from those, by whom we might be instructed, and drives those from us, whom we might instruct. (Danckert, 1992, p. 111)

Johnson also observed, more ominously: "He that overvalues himself will undervalue others, and he that undervalues others will oppress them" (Danckert, 1992, p. 98).

Barbara Lerner, in an article published in this magazine in 1985, noted that both Alfred Binet and Sigmund Freud defended "earned self-esteem" over the "feel-good-now self-esteem" that is now fashionable. Binet believed self-criticism is important, that it isn't inborn but must be learned, and that, in Lerner's words, "self-criticism [is] the essence of intelligence, the master key that unlock[s] the doors to competence and excellence alike." Freud was convinced that the child is absorbed with self and pleasure and can only be successful in his or her career or personal life by getting beyond self to challenges and beyond pleasure to reality.

A growing number of scholars and educators are endorsing this older perspective. "It makes no sense for students to be full of self-esteem if they are empty of knowledge," argues Paul Vitz (1994, p. 18), because they will have to face reality some day and realize that the self-adulation was empty whereas the ignorance remains real. For Martin Seligman, "what needs improving is not self-esteem but...our skills [for dealing] with the world" (cited in Reeve, 1996, p. 152). Summarizing contemporary research, John Marshall Reeve explains that the view of self formed in early childhood is shaped by "wildly biased parents," but eventually, through exposure to "peers, teachers, task feedback...and social comparison," a view simultaneously more realistic and more negative emerges—more negative because, contrary to the parents' view, "the self comes to realize that it is probably not the fastest, smartest, prettiest, and strongest self in the history of the world."

Reeve believes the evidence is clear that "increases in self-esteem do not produce increases in academic achievement; rather, increases in academic achievement produce increases in self-esteem." He therefore endorses a shift in educational emphasis from building self-esteem to developing academic skills through active, problem-based, collaborative learning. This approach, he believes, will develop a healthy self-view, which he defines as "authentic, realistic, and well articulated."

The evidence is certainly disturbing to the many educators who have embraced self-esteem, but it could hardly be clearer: The notion that high self-esteem automatically leads to success and low self-esteem to failure is unrealistic and obstructive of learning. In Alfie Kohn's words, "the whole enterprise could be said to encourage a self-absorption bordering on narcissism" (1994, p. 274). Teachers will do their students a service by shifting attention from the *self* performing the tasks to the *tasks* being performed, so that students can come to experience the sweeter and more meaningful satisfaction that *follows* accomplishment. That means replacing the attitude "If I have high self-esteem, I will be successful" with *"Self-esteem is of two kinds: earned and unearned. Only earned self-esteem is healthy and satisfying, and it doesn't precede achievement but follows it."*

One of the exercises used in *Thinking Critically About Attitudes* to help students discover the greater reasonableness of the latter attitude is as follows: List five difficult challenges you have successfully met—for example, learning to play chess. Then reflect on each experience and try to recall whether your self-esteem increased, decreased, or stayed the same after your achievement. Be prepared to discuss your findings and their significance in class.

* * *

"I have a right to my opinion, so my opinions are right"

"Well, that's my opinion!" The statement, familiar to every classroom teacher from the early grades through graduate school, is made with the confidence medieval miscreants displayed when they rushed through the cathedral doors a few steps ahead of the authorities and cried "Sanctuary." Once formally labeled as an opinion, an idea is considered safe from criticism, challenge, and even simple questioning. Thus, the expected response on the teacher's part is to cease offending and acknowledge the validity of the student's statement. If the rules of this game applied equally to all players, teachers could at least be assured that *their* opinions would be accorded similar respect, but, alas, that is not the case. When the teacher says something that a student disagrees with, the teacher is still the offender because the student's right to be right trumps the teacher's right to her opinion.

Opinion has not always been so highly esteemed. "Here is the beginning of philosophy," wrote Epictetus, a first-century Greek philosopher, "a recognition of the conflicts between men, a search for their cause, *a condemnation of mere opinion*...and the discovery of a standard of judgment" [emphasis added]. Sir Robert Peel defined opinion as "a compound of folly, weakness, prejudice, wrong feeling, right feeling, obstinacy, and newspaper paragraphs"; John Erskine as "that exercise of the human will which helps us to make a decision without information." William Wordsworth claimed that far from liberating us, opinion enslaves us. André Gide offered this lament: "Most often people seek in life occasions for persisting in their opinions rather than for educating themselves. Each of us looks for justification in the event. The rest, which runs counter to that opinion, is overlooked....It seems as if the mind enjoys nothing more than sinking deeper into error."

The common thread in all these observations is that all people have a natural tendency to exalt their opinions. My term for this tendency is "mine-is-better" thinking. It first manifests itself in early childhood in attitudes such as "my Daddy is stronger than yours," "my dolly is prettier," "my bike is faster," and so on. In adulthood it can be found, albeit in muted form, in the attitude that our status symbols are more impressive and *our opinions more worthy* than other people's. (For some strange reason, many of us seem able to maintain the "mine-is-better" attitude and simultaneously feel envious of others.) Even when it is not delusionary, the "mine-is-better" tendency is an impediment both to sound thinking and to effective functioning in society; one might have reasonably expected that an industry that promoted self-improvement would oppose it. Unfortunately, the opposite has occurred. By promoting self-adulation and self-assertion, self-improvement mavens have legitimized the "mine-is-better" tendency.

The attitude "I have a right to my opinion, so my opinions are right" leads to a number of unfortunate assumptions. One is that there is no need to exercise care in thinking or to consider a variety of viewpoints before selecting one. Another is that the way the opinion is expressed—the precision and felicity of the words, the coherence of the phrasing, the observance of the conventions of grammar and usage—is unimportant, and teachers who place emphasis on such matters are fussbudgets. A third assumption is that questions about or challenges to one's opinion are personal insults to which the appropriate response is first to repeat the opinion, then to shout it, and finally to couple the shout with a personal insult to one's antagonists. The victor in this barbaric form of debate is, of course, the loudest, most insulting clod in the room.

The challenge for teachers is to help students discover that "I have a right to my opinion, so my opinions are right" is a logical fallacy and to adopt in its place the attitude *"I have a right to my opinion but since opinions don't come with a guarantee, I can't have confidence in them until I've tested them thoroughly."*

There is no quick and easy way to wean students away from the doctrine of opinion infallibility, but well-chosen initiatives, if sustained, can be effective. Teachers can create learning situations in which students have an opportunity to examine a variety of opinions on issues. Every academic field includes many once-controversial and still-controversial issues, and students can profit from exposure to both. The former illustrate opinions that have been definitively validated and invalidated, as well as the process by which this has been accomplished. The latter allow students to apply the process, at least at a rudimentary level, and prove for themselves that opinions are sometimes right and sometimes wrong.

As they employ these learning challenges, teachers should seize opportunities to explain and reinforce several important realities. First, *opinion* is simply another word for *idea*, and ideas differ widely in quality. Also, the sense of attachment and loyalty we feel toward our opinions proves that they are familiar, not that they are correct. Third, the phrase "having a right to one's opinion" refers to nothing more than the democratic tradition of free speech; in other words, that the Constitution guarantees all citizens the right to express their opinions *regardless of whether those opinions are right or wrong*. The purpose of this guarantee is twofold: to ensure that everyone enjoys the fundamental freedom of expression, and to enrich the dialogue about issues important to individuals and society so that the best ideas can be recognized and implemented. The framers of the Constitution's Bill of Rights presumed that the dialogue would be a spirited one, in which every idea was subjected to challenge. The attitude most in keeping with this ideal of free speech is that the expression of an opinion is but the first stage in a two-stage process; the second stage is vigorous debate.

* * *

"Expressing my negative feelings will relieve them"

According to psychologist Carol Tavris (1982), "Freud's and Darwin's theories represent a crucial pivot point in Western thought: for once the belief that we can control anger—indeed, must control it—bowed to the belief that we *cannot* control it, it was then only a short jump to the current conviction that we *should* not control it." Western society, in particular the U.S. populace, made that jump enthusiastically, with both feet. By the early 1970s, psychiatrist John R. Marshall observed with dismay that "there is a widespread belief that if a person can be convinced, allowed, or helped to express his feelings, he will in some way benefit from it. This conviction exists at all levels of psychological sophistication...[and] in almost all psychotherapies" (quoted in Tavris, 1982, p. 121).

The mischief this idea has wrought is considerable. It spawned therapies that celebrate rage, some urging the pummeling of inanimate objects symbolizing human beings, and others encouraging confrontations in which other people are accused of real and imagined offenses. A particular target in these confrontations is parents, who are believed to be responsible for whatever has gone wrong in one's life. It is not at all fanciful to see a connection between psychology's endorsement of emotional exhibitionism and both the loss of civility and the rising incidence of violent behavior.

Tavris exposes the error of the catharsis theory by demonstrating that expressing anger does not alleviate it but, rather, intensifies it and makes us feel worse instead of better, an idea that may seem new today but was well known among the ancients. She cites this passage in Plutarch: "For he who gives no fuel to fire puts it out, and likewise he who does not in the beginning nurse his wrath and does not puff himself up with anger takes precautions against it and destroys it." Modern research reinforces this view. In one study third-grade children were given three ways to deal with their anger at a classmate: talk it out with adults, play aggressively with guns, or receive an explanation of the reasons for the offending child's behavior. The third way was most successful. Another study compared several approaches to anger to see which lowered the blood pressure most. The most beneficial approach to vascular health wasn't ventilating or suppressing anger, but calming down, reflecting, and employing reason. Tavris concludes:

> The psychological rationales for ventilating anger do not stand up under experimental scrutiny. The weight of the evidence indicates precisely the opposite: expressing anger makes you angrier, solidifies an angry attitude, and establishes a hostile habit. If you keep quiet about momentary irritations and distract yourself with pleasant activity until your fury simmers down, chances are you will feel better, and feel better faster, than if you let yourself go in a shouting match. (p. 144)

These findings have important implications for education. They strongly suggest that students' displays of rudeness and hostility are learned behavior traceable to the fallacious notion that emotional health depends on ventilating negative feelings. What can be learned, happily, can also be unlearned. To that end, teachers should help students understand that restraint and self-control enable one to learn more effectively and to function better in everyday life. In other words, teachers should help students see the wisdom of replacing "Expressing my negative feelings will relieve them" with *"Expressing negative feelings serves only to aggravate them and make me feel worse."* This, of course, does not mean that we can never communicate displeasure—only that we overcome our angry feelings before doing so.

Students' own experiences will provide ample data for analysis. Have them list as many instances as they can when they got really angry and expressed their anger to others, either to the people they were angry with or others to whom they complained about the situation. Then have them reflect on each situation and decide whether expressing their anger diminished or increased it.

* * *

"The teacher's job is to entertain me"

Some students fidget in their seats, glance pleadingly at the wall clock every few seconds, and emit anguished sighs. Others are frozen in a variety of poses, staring catatonically, their faces expressionless. Eventually the bell rings, signaling the first group to race for the door and the others to awaken and slog to their next scheduled trance. Above the din, someone utters the mantra you have come to anticipate yet still dread, "This class sucks." The experience never fails to depress, but it is particularly painful when the day's lesson was one you tried to make especially lively and challenging. Constant repetition of this experience may be a major cause of teacher burnout, albeit one that receives little attention in the research literature.

Why do students behave like this? The way they talk about their teachers and courses provides a partial clue. They say, for example, "He is so boring—he goes on and on about every little detail," "That course is the most uninteresting one I ever took," and "I couldn't ever sit down to read that dumb textbook without falling asleep." Occasionally their remarks are more positive, as in "She is interesting," "He really makes the class lively," and "That textbook is easy to understand." But whether the assessment is negative or positive, its focus is almost always the teacher or the course rather than themselves. The only significant exception to this is when they are speaking about grades. Then they say "I earned an 'A' in that course." If the grade is low, of course, the phrasing is altered to "She (he) gave me a 'D.'" (For a pleasant fantasy, imagine a world in which the students assigned all credit to their teachers and all blame to themselves.)

Granted, when one person stands in front of 30 others every day and does most of the talking, the focus of the 30 is understandably on that person. Also, in a culture that gives more emphasis to rights than to responsibilities—or more precisely, assigns the pronoun *my* to rights and *your* to responsibilities—the dominant theme is predictably "the ways in which that person is denying me what is rightfully mine." But neither of these facts explains the concern that courses be interesting and lively. After all, one can at least imagine a society in which students care little whether a course sends chills up their spine but do demand that it transcend the superficial and penetrate the complexities of the subject.

That our students clamor for interesting, lively courses is attributable to lifelong conditioning by the media, especially television. *Sesame Street* set the standard that all subsequent instruction was expected to meet and no genuine instruction could ever meet. What teacher has life-sized talking animals to assist her, a technical staff to transform inanimate letters and numbers into dancing creatures, a film crew to ensure a pleasing variety of lens angles and distances, and an editorial staff to cut and paste and otherwise keep the instruction artificially stimulating? Even if the students had never seen a *Sesame Street* show, their several hour daily dose of television viewing—a substantial part of their waking lives—would have accomplished the same conditioning in them. An hour of television today typically includes extravagant visual and auditory stimulation—bells and lights on the game shows; explosions, car chases, and violence in dramatic shows—and almost constant shifting of attention from the show to a newsbreak to a cluster of four commercials to the next segment of the show. And so on, throughout the hour. The total number of attention shifts per hour is typically more than 800!

Television is essentially an entertainment medium, and any other purpose it may serve, such as communication, quickly takes on the form, texture, and trappings of entertainment. The men and women who have bid for students' attention from that electronic box have thus always been, in a very real sense, entertainers. The transaction has never required the slightest action on the part of the entertained. Thus, however unrealistic it may be for students to see the classroom as a stage on which teachers perform for their approval, that vision is perfectly consistent with their life experience. Our challenge as teachers is to help them see the teaching and learning situation more realistically and accurately; to understand that our role is much less significant than theirs because, although learning is often accomplished without the teacher's contribution, it can never be accomplished without the learner's; and to replace the performer/audience metaphor with that of guide and traveler. We must also help them appreciate that no teacher is talented enough to make the class interesting and lively alone, but even a mediocre teacher can do so with the students' assistance. In order to accomplish these things, we must help students get beyond the unrealistic attitude "The teacher's job is to entertain me" to the more mature *"The teacher's job is not to entertain me but to guide my learning, which depends upon my active participation."*

One good exercise for this purpose is the following:

> Get a pencil and paper. Then turn on the TV set (assuming it's not already on) and select a program, any program. Watch it for *exactly 15 minutes.* (Use a clock or timer.) Record the number of times the image changes on the screen by making a simple stroke tally on your paper. Don't concern yourself about whether what you're seeing is the program itself or a commercial or a newsbreak. *For each new image on the screen,* make a single stroke tally. The changes may come fast and furiously, so be ready for them.

Most students will be amazed at the number of image changes they tally. Class discussion should address the fact that each change represents a forced and in most cases artificial attention shift and that the cumulative effect of years of television viewing is an expectation, in some cases a demand, that reality—in the classroom, on the job, in everyday activities—match the artificial standard. Of course, it cannot meet that standard, so the result is boredom, frustration, and anger. The key insight students should take away from this exercise is that the problem is not the teacher's but theirs, and they alone can solve it.

Teachers, of course, can help. We can shift the spotlight from ourselves to our students, creating a classroom situation in which the important activities—asking and answering questions, solving problems, analyzing issues, interpreting and evaluating data, and reaching conclusions—are performed by them rather than by us. Putting them more directly in charge of their own learning makes it impossible for them to say, "This class sucks" without experiencing the liberating insight *"and I am responsible."* □

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(Continued from page 31)

to the Muslim Brotherhood, captured majorities in three cities and made an impressive showing in Amman. In Lebanon, a country that remains under Syrian domination, modest democratic progress was registered through relatively pluralistic local elections.

Although we tend to think of civilizations and cultures as fixed and stable, political transformations within civilizations can spread rapidly. For example, before the third wave of democratization was launched in the 1970s, the majority of predominantly Catholic countries were tyrannies; they included Latin America's oligarchies and military dictatorships, East-Central Europe's Marxist-Leninist states, Iberia's authoritarian-corporatist systems, and the Philippine dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. Social scientists speculated about the influence that Catholicism's hierarchical system of church authority might have on Catholic attitudes toward politics. Today, of course, most Catholic countries have become Free and democratic, and some would argue that it was precisely the internal discipline of the Catholic church that made possible the rapid spread of pro-democratic values following Vatican II and under the papacy of John Paul II.

Democracy and Conflict

While there are numerous studies suggesting that democracies do not engage in war with one another, the last two decades of democratic expansion have been accomplished by numerous violent conflicts, mostly within states. An influential annual survey of major conflicts[1] has shown the following trends for the last decade:

- conflicts reached a peak in 1992, but have since gradually decreased across all regions; while an annual average of 48.3 interstate and intrastate conflicts took place in the period 1989-1994, this annual average fell to 35.2 in the period 1995-98;
- the number of major conflicts (that is, those in which there are over 1,000 deaths per year) has significantly declined from a high of 20 in 1991 and 1992 to 14 in 1993, to seven in 1994, down to six in 1995 and 1996, to seven in 1997, and up to 13 in 1998.

While there is no absolute guarantee that the downward trend will be sustained, it correlates well with the evidence of the gradual and incremental expansion of democracy and freedom in the last decade. Indeed, a close examination of the survey's regional data indicates that in the regions where democracy is predominant and political freedom is highest (that is, Europe and the Americas), armed conflicts are proportionally the lowest. Two factors appear to be related to major intrastate conflicts: the absence of democratic systems and weak states. This is underscored by the data related to strife in 1998. Of the 13 major conflicts in 1998, nine occurred in Africa, where weak states predominate and where democratic systems account for less than a third of all countries.

As Timothy Sisk has suggested, much of the upsurge in strife and violence that occurred in the aftermath of the Cold War in the early 1990s "erupted as inept authoritarian regimes decayed, state authority collapsed, and a struggle for power ensued."[2] Conflicts also emerged in the aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet empire, as the new, weak successor states lacked internal legitimacy. It is the collapse of unstable tyrannies, not conflict occasioned by democratic ferment, that is largely at the root of post-Cold War upheaval. At the same time, there is good reason to suggest that the decline in major conflicts is closely connected with the global expansion of democracy, which in the last 10 years has seen the number of Free countries increase from 61 to 85 and the number of Not Free states decline from 62 to 48.

The Effects of Intervention

The mayhem, ethnic and sectarian conflict, and civil war that have ravaged the world in the years since the end of the Cold War have occasioned numerous international humanitarian interventions, some of them involving the armed might of the United States and other advanced industrial democracies, frequently operating under the aegis of the United Nations. Few would question the good intentions behind such interventions; many might go so far as to agree that, in the face of ethnic cleansing and acts of genocide directed at innocent civilians, the international community has an obligation to act. Yet the record of successful recovery from conflicts in which the international community has intervened is very mixed.

While many of these interventions have put an end to mass violence, they have not led to durable nation-building efforts rooted in reconciliation through democratic processes. External interventions have tended merely to freeze conflicts and to result in an intrusive international presence. While motivated by noble intentions, this international presence has had the paradoxical effect of halting the emergence of stable and sustainable democratic structures and impeding civic revival.

As a result, the list of UN-sanctioned missions and peacekeeping efforts has kept growing, while the number of countries successfully emerging from their status as international protectorates has declined. Today, there are UN peacekeeping operations in 17 areas around the world, some (like the UN's efforts to maintain the peace between Egypt and Israel and between India and Pakistan) having originated in the late 1940s. Twelve UN missions have come into being since 1991, with eight of them in place since 1995.

Last year saw a major NATO-led humanitarian intervention in Kosovo that successfully reversed the Yugoslav government's ethnic-cleansing campaign against the Albanian population. This action emphasized the resolve of the democratic world to prevent ethnic atrocities in its backyard. Yet the situation in postconflict Kosovo has not become easier to handle in the aftermath of the intervention. Indeed, while much suffering has been alleviated for the Albanian citizenry, a campaign of terror against Serbs and Gypsies (Roma), resulting in the death of hundreds of civilians and the displacement of tens of thousands, has effectively cleansed Kosovo of many of its non-Albanian minorities. At the same time, the international community's unwillingness to risk attacks on its peacekeepers has resulted in significant compromises that have strengthened the power of the authoritarian Kosovo Liberation Army. Both these factors suggest that an effective, democratically based exit strategy is an unlikely prospect in the medium term, while the likelihood of a return of Serbian and Gypsy populations is remote.

In Bosnia, democratic progress has been thwarted by the persistence of substantial support for Serbian hard-liners in Republika Srpska and the resultant restriction on democratic choice imposed by the Office of the High Representative of the United Nations. In 1999, similar restrictions were imposed by the UN, including the blocking of a proposed head of a Republika Srpska broadcasting authority. While such actions by the international community may have been justified, they made clear to citizens of Bosnia that the powers of their democratically elected leaders were significantly restricted.

The singular lack of success of international efforts in other settings, including Somalia (now abandoned by the UN), Angola, and Haiti, provides additional examples that underscore the difficulties inherent in post-conflict state-building and reconciliation efforts. In most peacekeeping exercises, the international community is ultimately faced with a Hobson's choice: persist in supervising the internal political situation and restrict democratic development (thus risking the growth of public cynicism about the authority of indigenous political institutions), or accede to de facto ethnic separation and ratify the results of ethnic cleansing.

In short, while outside intervention puts an end to mayhem, it appears not to have found a formula that would allow for authentic, indigenously driven transitions to more open societies. In turn, the seemingly intractable nature of the political and ethnic divisions results in a protracted international presence that uses up vast resources, diverting funds that could be applied to new and emerging democracies that have avoided violence and strife.

The end-of-the-century survey of *Freedom in the World* shows that the number of electoral democracies continues to grow. At the same time, it shows that the process of deepening liberal democratic practices is complex and requires long-term development of civic democratic consciousness and the rule of law. Nevertheless, as the century and millennium end, advocates of policies to promote democratic transitions can take heart. Their efforts to strengthen democratic movements and democratic values around the world have contributed to the significant expansion of freedom registered in the long-term data of this survey. With growing signs of democratic ferment in the Islamic countries, the coming century holds open the promise of a new, more cohesive global community linked by shared democratic values. □

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Democracy as a Universal Value

(Continued from page 22)

concepts of society and government and East Asian concepts" by explaining, "when I say East Asians, I mean Korea, Japan, China, Vietnam, as distinct from Southeast Asia, which is a mix between the Sinic and the Indian, though Indian culture itself emphasizes similar values."[8]

Even East Asia itself, however, is remarkably diverse, with many variations to be found not only among Japan, China, Korea, and other countries of the region, but also *within* each country. Confucius is the standard author quoted in interpreting Asian values, but he is not the only intellectual influence in these countries (in Japan, China, and Korea for example, there are very old and very widespread Buddhist traditions, powerful for over a millennium and a half, and there are also other influences, including a considerable Christian presence). There is no homogeneous worship of order over freedom in any of these cultures.

Furthermore, Confucius himself did not recommend blind allegiance to the state. When Zilu asks him "how to serve a prince," Confucius replies (in a statement that the censors of authoritarian regimes may want to ponder), "Tell him the truth even if it offends him."[9] Confucius is not averse to practical caution and tact, but does not forgo the recommendation to oppose a bad government (tactfully, if necessary): "When the [good] way prevails in the state, speak boldly and act boldly. When the state has lost the way, act boldly and speak softly."[10]

Indeed, Confucius provides a clear pointer to the fact that the two pillars of the imagined edifice of Asian values, loyalty to family and obedience to the state, can be in severe conflict with each other. Many advocates of the power of "Asian values" see the role of the state as an extension of the role of the family, but as Confucius noted, there can be tension between the two. The Governor of She told Confucius, "Among my people, there is a man of unbending integrity: when his father stole a sheep, he denounced him." To this Confucius replied, "Among my people, men of integrity do things differently: a father covers up for his son, a son covers up for his father—and there is integrity in what they do."[11]

The monolithic interpretation of Asian values as hostile to democracy and political rights does not bear critical scrutiny. I should not, I suppose, be too critical of the lack of scholarship supporting these beliefs, since those who have made these claims are not scholars but political leaders, often official or unofficial spokesmen for authoritarian governments. It is, however, interesting to see that while we academics can be impractical about practical politics, practical politicians can, in turn, be rather impractical about scholarship.

It is not hard, of course, to find authoritarian writings within the Asian traditions. But neither is it hard to find them in Western classics: One has only to reflect on the writings of Plato or Aquinas to see that devotion to discipline is not a special Asian taste. To dismiss the plausibility of democracy as a universal value because of the presence of some Asian writings on discipline and order would be similar to rejecting the plausibility of democracy as a natural form of government in Europe or America today on the basis of the writings of Plato or Aquinas (not to mention the substantial medieval literature in support of the Inquisitions).

Due to the experience of contemporary political battles, especially in the Middle East, Islam is often portrayed as fundamentally intolerant of and hostile to individual freedom. But the presence of diversity and variety *within* a tradition applies very much to Islam as well. In India, Akbar and most of the other Moghul emperors (with the notable exception of Aurangzeb) provide good examples of both the theory and practice of political and religious tolerance. The Turkish emperors were often more tolerant than their European contemporaries. Abundant examples can also be found among rulers in Cairo and Baghdad. Indeed, in the 12th century, the great Jewish scholar Maimonides had to run away from an intolerant Europe (where he was born), and from its persecution of Jews, to the security of a tolerant and urbane Cairo and the patronage of Sultan Saladin.

Diversity is a feature of most cultures in the world. Western civilization is no exception. The practice of democracy that has won out in the *modern* West is largely a result of a consensus that has emerged since the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, and particularly in the last century or so. To read in this a historical commitment of the West—over the millennia—to democracy, and then to contrast it with non-Western traditions (treating each as monolithic) would be a great mistake. This tendency toward oversimplification can be seen not only in the writings of some governmental spokesmen in Asia, but also in the theories of some of the finest Western scholars themselves.

As an example from the writings of a major scholar whose works, in many other ways, have been totally impressive, let me cite Samuel Huntington's thesis on the clash of civilizations, where the heterogeneities *within* each culture get quite inadequate recognition. His study comes to the clear conclusion that "a sense of individualism and a tradition of rights and liberties" can be found in the West that are "unique among civilized societies."[12] Huntington also argues that "the central characteristics of the West, those which distinguish it from other civilizations, antedate the modernization of the West." In his view, "The West was West long before it was modern."[13] It is this thesis that—I have argued—does not survive historical scrutiny.

For every attempt by an Asian government spokesman to contrast alleged "Asian values" with alleged Western ones, there is, it seems, an attempt by a Western intellectual to make a similar contrast from the other side. But even though every Asian pull may be matched by a Western push, the two together do not really manage to dent democracy's claim to be a universal value.

Where the Debate Belongs

I have tried to cover a number of issues related to the claim that democracy is a universal value. The value of democracy includes its *intrinsic importance* in human life, its *instrumental role* in generating political incentives, and its *constructive function* in the formation of values (and in understanding the force and feasibility of claims of needs, rights, and duties). These merits are not regional in character. Nor is the advocacy of discipline or order. Heterogeneity of values seems to characterize most, perhaps all, major cultures. The cultural argument does not foreclose, nor indeed deeply constrain, the choices we can make today.

Those choices have to be made here and now, taking note of the functional roles of democracy, on which the case for democracy in the contemporary world depends. I have argued that this case is indeed strong and not regionally contingent. The force of the claim that democracy is a universal value lies, ultimately, in that strength. That is where the debate belongs. It cannot be disposed of by imagined cultural taboos or assumed civilizational predispositions imposed by our various pasts.

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