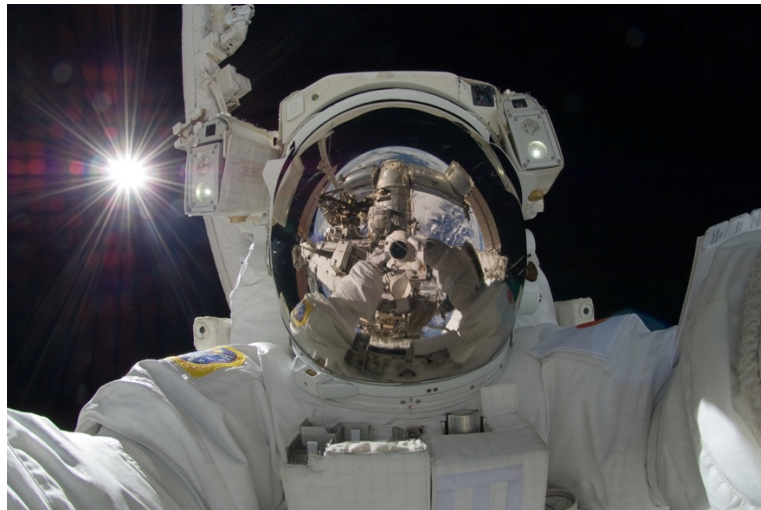


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Anchor Text

Breakfast of Champions or Goodbye, Blue Monday

By Kurt Vonnegut



Click [here](#) to download the text.

Click [here](#) to download the 2020-2021 Summer Assignment

Breakfast of Champions and America's Social Problems

Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions* (1973) is perhaps the most negative novel ever written about American society. It was published shortly after the Vietnam War, at a time when Americans were beginning to face up to their ugly social problems, including pervasive racism, sexism, the unequal distribution of wealth, alienation, and a polluted environment. These problems are in front of us on every page of the novel. Since the same problems continue to plague us today, it is worth looking at what a thoughtful critic like Vonnegut has to say about them. To put his ideas about American society into context, I'd like to begin with a look at what social scientists and historians have said about the country's economic and social history.

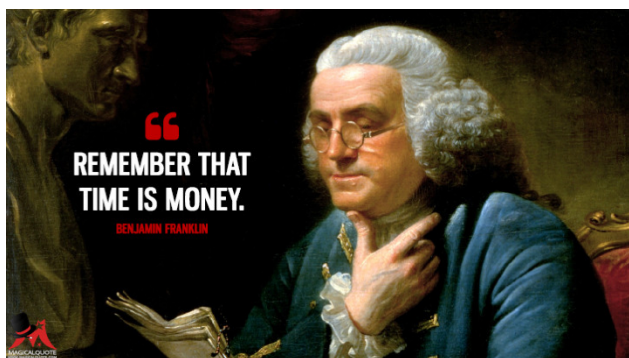


A Brief Economic and Social History

Economists and sociologists have often pointed out that by the 1950s and '60s, a new kind of American society had emerged: one that differed greatly from the society established in New England by the Puritans some 300 years before. It was still a society with an economy based on money and profit-making, but by this time in the mid 20th century there had been amazing technological development and economic growth that led to other major changes. In general, there was a change from what sociologists call a "production-oriented society" to a "consumption-oriented society," marked by machine production replacing much of the human labor that traditionally supplied the food, shelter, and clothing Americans needed. Rather than human hands, machines, assembly lines, and power tools were increasingly used in growing crops, making products like shoes and clothing, and building houses (think of electric saws vs. hand saws, for instance). The American economy – as well as the economy of much of the world – had made the leap from an agrarian life to an industrial one.

In examining this shift, I'd like to take a step back and take a closer look at the origin of American capitalism. The Puritans in early American society believed that God only loves people who live ascetic lives, people who work hard at their "callings" and save their money, not people who spend it on everyday pleasures and consumption goods. To spend on pleasure was a sign of being one of the "damned" who would never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This attitude of "all work and no play" is called "the Protestant ethic," and it led to economic and technological development not only because it encouraged Americans to spend their lives working, but also because it encouraged entrepreneurs to put more of their profits back into developing their businesses and investing in the businesses of their neighbors. Good puritans worked hard for His glory, and the harder they worked, the more capital they were able to accumulate. And yet, only bad people spent money on pleasures like golden candlesticks and fine shoes. Without spending, only investing, they accumulated capital, and those with more were obviously the Chosen Ones of the Lord. Today, it's clear that a more common attitude is to spend one's money on whatever will produce pleasure, and since the Protestant ethic discouraged this tendency, it fostered further business growth and economic development.

Even when Americans became less religious over the years, popular writers still encouraged this frugal attitude toward consumption. In the 18th century, Benjamin Franklin famously told Americans that “time is money,” counseling that one’s time on Earth should be spent trying to make more money rather than consuming and playing around, and Horatio Alger spread the same message in his well-liked “rags-to-riches” novels in the 19th century. (Today, McDonald’s employees are all-too-familiar with the Franklin-esque aphorism: “It there’s tie to lean, there’s time to clean.”) It’s clear how bound our sense of time and thoughts about money have become: you can spend them, save them, invest them, and squander (waste)



them. So, popular American writers continued to advocate what was needed for economic development, even though they didn’t bring God into the picture — money and profits were still to be saved and reinvested, with a focus on making more and more money, not on spending it. These early attitudes, most famously explored by sociologist Max Weber in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, are behind the widespread economic development that occurred throughout the Protestant world.

Later, as factory and machine production took off in the 19th and 20th centuries, Americans’ traditional attitude toward consumption **changed**. The new way of doing things led to amazing productivity, and stores were flooded with new products that clearly had to be consumed if people were going to keep their jobs and keep the economy going. Increasingly, what was needed wasn’t Puritanical or miserly savers, but hedonistic spenders willing to constantly consume everything the capitalists came up with.

These changes in production methods and available supplies of goods led to other economic and social developments as well. Among them was the opening up of a major “service sector” in the economy, with more and more Americans working in places like restaurants, beauty salons, dry cleaners, and car repair shops: places that provide services for the community. In the mid-19th century, technical achievements in construction involving glass and steel led directly to the development of consumer super centers that were as centers of one’s social as they were one’s economic life: the mall. Outdoor malls allows consumers to spend, capitalists to market their products, and women to find paid jobs as “shoppe girls” and increasing the pool of consumers, meaning widespread economic growth.

Today we are used to these business establishments, but it’s important to remember that most of what they do was *traditionally* done at home: people changed their own oil, sewed their own clothes, and even prepared the bodies of their own deceased family members right there at home! You can think of your own examples of the many things that used to be made at home but are now purchased at a store or now, of course, online. It’s likely that you and most of your friends work, or will work, in the service sector at some point in your lives.

This new kind of economy seems to have made the development of a consumption-oriented society inevitable: a society increasingly preoccupied with buying up the latest products. There have been several major analyses of this change in American society, but one of the best is an early one by sociologist David Riesman in *The Lonely Crowd*, emphasizing that, once modern technology made it possible to constantly produce a lot of new goods in a short period of time, getting people to consume them was – and is – *essential*. Think about how, looking back through the pages of history, we see clothing styles

that lasted for decades, but with our new mega-productive technology, new styles walk the runway twice a year. And who wants to buy last year's car when they can get a new model? How many of you became dissatisfied with your miracle-fast iPhone 8 as soon as the iPhone X hit the shelves? As Riesman emphasizes, if we didn't develop this consumer-orientation, there wouldn't be a market for the latest products, and the economy would *crash*.



This change in attitude toward consumption was essential, and it led to something else new: a dramatically enlarged advertising industry. Prior to the 20th century, advertising budgets were relatively small (sometimes just a guy shouting from the back of a wagon), and advertisers were mainly concerned with providing information about their product, but today advertising is a major industry, and it is especially focused on creating desire for a product. Without advertising, Americans might not want most of the things that are for sale. And it is not likely they would think that the purchase of material goods is what will bring them happiness in life.

In *Culture Against Man*, anthropologist Jules Henry sums up our present economic and social situation by noting that the American way of life is now based on two new commandments: "Create more desire!" and "Thou shalt consume!" Again, what is needed is advertising (with the help of peer groups and, today, social media) that constantly keeps us dissatisfied with what we have, telling us that last year's car isn't good enough, that to be happy we need a new one, and next year another new one. And so on. And how could anyone be happy with last year's shoes, energy drink, or video game system! As long as we're dissatisfied with what we have, we keep buying and, as long as we keep buying, everything works. Indeed, the advertising world's mantra is central to Vonnegut's take on the current "American way of life."

Vonnegut's Criticisms of American Society

Keeping this brief economic and social history in mind, we can turn to *Breakfast of Champions*. The novel attempts to give us a sociological picture of American life, meaning that Vonnegut is deliberately centering our attention not on the characters in the way novelists generally do, but on what our whole vast society is like. The main story flows from the meeting of the two main characters in Midland City, Indiana: the Pontiac dealer and businessman Dwayne Hoover and the science-fiction writer Kilgore Trout. As the story develops, we see them interacting with a great many other Americans (Dwayne talks with people in Indiana and Kilgore talks with people he meets hitchhiking from New York to Midland City), and what emerges is a picture of a cross-section of American society. In particular, we learn something about the lives of all sorts of Americans: e.g., salespeople, dishwashers, a cocktail waitress, a black ex-con, a Nigerian intern, a gay piano player, a truck driver, a secretary, a wealthy manufacturer, a teenage girl who works at a fast food restaurant, and more.



These characters are individuals, but collectively they not only show us an entire society but also its major social problems. To round out the picture, Vonnegut gives a brief history of the society, beginning with the “Sea Pirates” who arrived in America in 1492 through the founding of a democratic society by slave owners, then getting into some of the later developments up until the time of the novel’s writing. We are also given a picture of the white-controlled history of African Americans, beginning with slavery, and extending to the Jim Crow Era and “the great migration” into the cities where most African Americans live today. His depiction of history is consistently ugly and does not show signs of moral progress.

Capturing the time he was writing, Vonnegut shows us what sociologists have also emphasized: a highly productive, consumer-oriented American society. It is a society with citizens who are motivated by two primary desires, e.g., to get more money, and mainly to use it to get more consumer goods. The desire to get more money Vonnegut describes as a “madness,” and he suggests that the same is true of the desire to get more stuff. On page after page of this novel, we read about human beings who are obsessed with buying everything under the sun: new washing machines and new cars, steel belted radial tires, Permastone house siding! Yes, the Americans who buy these things want to make a lot of money so they can buy these things, and how wonderful that what they can buy is endless. Without acquiring *things*, how else will the world know that you are “fabulously well to do?”

The many advertisements featured in the novel show us why Americans suffer from this consumer madness; above all, they tell us that the new material goods being advertised are what will make them happy in life. This of course is what we see on television and in the media everyday, and it seems hard for anyone to grow up glued to a screen and not think of the latest consumer goods as happiness machines. How many American kids can resist the thought that they will be happier riding a new bike? How many teens can resist the thought that trendy clothes or a cool new car will bring happiness? And when we think of the long work hours older Americans put in, it is easy to assume they are working for the same reason: for the happiness that they think they will get from the latest appliances or new furniture or new computer, or ooh, maybe a new boat.

In describing our consumer way of life, Vonnegut also shows us that Americans get a sense of *identity* from what they consume. As one of the characters, whose family has bought a lot of Pontiacs, tells us: “We’re a Pontiac family!” Vonnegut is mocking here, but is he wrong to think that a lot of Americans do get a sense of identity and self-worth from the products they purchase? —that a flashy new car makes them feel successful, while others are embarrassed by the old car they’re stuck with. Apple computers all ship with stickers to be placed on your car’s back window: two big apples and two small apples will proudly announce to the stranger driving behind you that he is following an Apple Family! There is something disturbing about basing one’s identity and self-worth not on achievements or the ability to help



others, but instead on the goods that can be purchased. Yet, just thinking of my own SOCES students, it’s obvious that Vonnegut is not exaggerating and that such an attitude is terribly common. The sense that “I am what I consume” seems to be all too normal. It is encouraged by ads that show us people looking up to someone simply because she is now driving a new car or because she just got a new diamond ring. We have even been told that buying the right kind of *soft drinks* can increase

one's popularity! Personally, I've never experienced more or less friends based on drinking a specific carbonated sugar drink, but Coca Cola Bottlers spent over 4.25 billion dollars *each year* between 2015 and 2019 trying to make sure I think of myself as a Coke Man (*Investopedia*, May 18, 2020)!

At the same time *Breakfast of Champions* was published, the Pop Art movement was growing, and it too reminds us that America has become a nation of consumers. Artists began emphasizing this by moving mass produced consumer goods into art galleries to show us what beauty had come to mean to us, and also that we take pride not in something carefully crafted by a human being, but in things that rolled off an assembly line and into the mall or grocery store. When Andy Warhol put a Campbell's Soup can into a gallery, he was simply saying "This is who we are," and Vonnegut is saying the same thing in *Breakfast of Champions*.

In explaining, Vonnegut emphasizes how we are constantly encouraged to turn to products for satisfaction. This keeps the economy going and might seem harmless, but notice that the phrase "encouraged to turn to products for satisfaction" can be completed with "rather than turn to other human beings for satisfaction." In other words, our American consumer education encourages us to ignore the satisfaction we might get from our relationships with other people. It seems obvious that if we are focused on getting and enjoying consumption goods, we will not be thinking about getting close to others, meeting their needs and at the same time our own.

The point is that consumer goods cannot bring satisfaction to our emotional nature – only other people can.

Products are dead things that "give" us nothing; we might love them, but they don't love us back. Only other people can give us the love and emotional fulfillment that we seek. And since the people around us are also seeking satisfaction from products rather than people, alienation and loneliness pervade our consumer-oriented society.

The sociologist Philip Slater pointed out this problem in his book about consumer America: *The Pursuit of Loneliness*. It's an interesting thought that in pursuing material goods, we are *also* pursuing our alienation, emotional deprivation, and loneliness. We see it throughout *Breakfast of Champions*, where just about everybody is chasing after the latest hot stuff, but living without lovers and so alienated from others that they can't even remember another human being's name unless he is a built to stand out in a book of characters built to stand out: a one-armed albino or tap-dancing, farting alien.

This alienation helps to explain another ugly social fact illustrated in *Breakfast of Champion* – one that we still face today: American society's unequal distribution of wealth. As Vonnegut puts it, Americans have been told that they "shouldn't have to share with others if they don't want to, and most of them don't want to. So they don't have to!" Vonnegut also shows us the consequences of this attitude, namely, that some Americans own large parts of the Earth's surface and are "fabulously well to do," while others own nothing and are homeless on "skid row."

We also read about people in our wealthy society who can't afford health care, and we read about the masses of African Americans who got their freedom but had no cultural capital to go along with it, and so they continue to live in poverty. And we are reminded that many get caught up in the prison system at an early age, and end up spending most of their lives in prisons. Vonnegut's picture of race relations is



consistently ugly, and perhaps at the time he wrote, it was easy to think that a great deal of racial progress was being made, but it is not so easy today, in the era of George Floyd and the BLM movement.

Breakfast of Champions directs our attention to another major social problem that still plagues us, and it is that we are rapidly destroying life on Earth. This was probably inevitable once an economic system based on profit-making was brought together with technological development and a consumer-oriented society. And as was noted earlier, *Breakfast* was written just as Americans were beginning to face up to the negative ecological consequences of our incredible productivity and consumerism. In the novel, we are constantly reminded of this when we watch Trout hitchhiking across the country, as our attention is directed toward smoky and smoggy skylines, mountains torn up from strip mining, and poisoned marshes, streams and rivers, one of which is so polluted that it catches fire! This is the price we pay for the wonders of producing hair care products and kitty litter, Vonnegut reminds us, challenging us to ask ourselves if the planet itself is worth the price of industrial capitalism. All of this is a major consequence of our high rates of production and use of fossil fuels, and since *Breakfast of Champions* was written, things have gotten worse. Today, it is hard to ignore the deadly consequences of global warming all over the Earth.

Is There Any Hope?

But Vonnegut is not a nihilist, and he also provides us with hope. He emphasizes that the thoughts, wants, and actions of human beings are not shaped by instincts or fixed tendencies, but rather by “a cultural program that human beings have created.”

In stressing this, Vonnegut reminds us of what anthropologists have also pointed out: that is the extreme malleability of our species, a malleability that makes it possible for us to live in all sorts of ways, and to want and think all kinds of things.



Thus in his Nobel Prize address Trout tells us that, if human beings can have a lust for gold, well, they can believe anything. Trout also mentions the strange sexual lives of Americans, filled with obsessions such as getting to see a little girls’ underpants. Here you might also think of some of the silly consumption goods that you have wanted because you believed they would make you happy: an expensive purse, the label on some pants, a basketball player’s name on a shoe.

Such beliefs are a result of a cultural program that Americans have internalized. In the Preface to the novel, Vonnegut tells us he is going to show us his (and our) cultural program, and then throughout the rest of the book, show us the behavior and society that result from following it. We get a sample in the very first sentence when he tells us that the story will be about two “white men. Be clear that Vonnegut isn’t saying we should immediately identify a human being by whether he is “Black” or “White” when we meet him; he is saying that this is what we have been *programmed* to do in our society.

The hope is that, once we become *aware* of the connection between our program and the ugly behavior and society it leads to, we will want to change the program.

For example, once we think about the connection between our culturally programmed racism and the pain it causes, we will destroy the program and create a better one that will encourage a diverse society that we can be proud of.

Toward the end of the novel Vonnegut builds on his message of hope, developing how people are not machines with an unchangeable way of being, and that we have “awareness.” He means that we are not

just animals who are (culturally) programmed to do this or think that; we are also creatures who have an awareness of our situation in the world.

Our awareness, says Vonnegut, is the “sacred” part of us, and it is sacred because it enables us to change our program and improve our life on Earth.

This of course is his goal in writing *Breakfast*.

This essay should conclude with an apology. I present *Breakfast of Champions* as though it were a sociological treatise – or perhaps a time-capsule built for a future race of aliens who will inherit a dead world that has consumed itself – and nothing has been said about the fact that it is also a beautifully written and original novel. No attention has been given to Vonnegut’s characterizations of a wide cast of characters, or to Trout’s dark humor and alluring science fiction stories, or to the surprising shifts in space and time that occur that are a part of this carnival of metafiction. And no attention has been given to the clever narration of events: a narration that is not only punctuated by Trout’s tales and Vonnegut’s childish drawings, but also by Vonnegut’s comments about his own personal life and even by his throwing himself into the story and interacting with his characters in a bar! All of this shows a great deal of originality, but it is also carefully designed to destroy the illusion that our thoughts are based on Truth. Rather, as he tells us in the last part of the novel, we need to realize that our thoughts are based on “fiction.” Specifically, he wants us to be aware that it isn’t Truth but bad fiction that explains our greed, loneliness, and destruction of the planet. Whereas in his final play Shakespeare told us, “We are such stuff / as dreams are made on,” in *Breakfast of Champions* Vonnegut is telling us, “We are such stuff as bad fiction is based on.” What is needed in American society are some better stories.

Study Questions: “*Breakfast of Champions* and America’s Social Problems”

1. What were the two great changes that took place in the American economy by the time Vonnegut wrote *Breakfast of Champions*?

According to the brief “Social and Economic History,” what was the early American attitude...

- 2a. --toward profit-making?
- 2b. --toward consumption?

3. What was the “Protestant ethic,” and why was it good for *early* economic development?
4. Why was Franklin’s and Alger’s advice in the 18th and 19th centuries good for economic development?

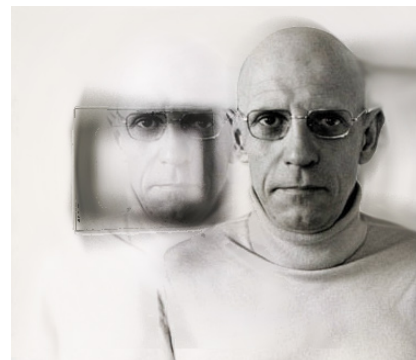
According to sociologists, American society has changed from being a “production-oriented society” to a “consumption-oriented society.”

- 5a. What is the difference between these two?
- 5b. Why did this change have to take place?
- 6a. According to Jules Henry, what are the two new commandments in our consumer-oriented society?
- 6b. What is the new industry that makes the present-day economy work, and why is it so important?
7. What “kind of a family” do you belong to?
8. What does Pop art have in common with *Breakfast of Champions*?
9. In presenting our consumer style of life, Vonnegut shows that we are taught to turn to consumer goods for satisfaction rather than other people. Why might you be critical of this thought?
- 10a. What is the American attitude toward “sharing” one’s wealth with others?
- 10b. What is the consequence?
- 11a. When it comes to the possibility of changing and improving our society, what does Vonnegut see as hopeful?
- 11b. Why did he write this book?
12. What does Vonnegut conclude that the thoughts and lives of SOCES students are based upon?

Source A
FOUCAULT: HIS PROJECT AND *THE HISTORY OF MADNESS*

An Overview of Foucault's Project

In beginning our work in AP Seminar, you should know that I've been doing a great deal of thinking about the themes that are important in the lives of human beings like you, SOCES student. When I use the word "theme," I am broadening its use to mean more than just "subject" or "topic," as many people use the term. Thinking *thematically* implies finding the connections between ideas as well as uncovering different approaches to wrestling with that knowledge. Once we encounter those differing views, one of our goals will be **entering the conversation**: finding our own reasoned solutions to the problems we encounter in the world.



One reason I'd like to start with the work of the French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault is because he deals with so many complex themes. The human being as a subject is one of them, and because all his themes connect back to this, it will be our focus in what follows. Our interest, in other words, will be pursuing the question of *how we should think about human beings in the world*. You may conclude, as Foucault seems to, that the human being is not simply an animal like all the rest of the life forms on this planet; rather, we are nature's self-deceiving, power-hungry animal, and this distinction has its causes and consequences.

As we begin exploring Foucault's themes that touch on questions of power, discipline, punishment, sexuality, normalcy, illness, education, criminality, social norms, *otherness*, and so many others, it helps to keep in mind that he is notoriously difficult, and this is partly because his writing is often elliptical. Reading him as a primary source is challenging, even for graduate students. For that reason, I'd like to present him, for the most part, in secondary sources: you're reading one now. His ideas will serve as a starting point for thinking about themes, asking complex questions, entering interdisciplinary conversations, assembling our own well-reasoned arguments, drawing on evidence to support those arguments, and finding solutions to some of the social, cultural, scientific, linguistic, and political problems that we may uncover.

So who was Michel Foucault? As of this writing, a look at Google Scholar shows over one million titles of articles and books written by people in the disciplines of art, music, economics, business, education, ethnic studies, government, law, politics, history geography, medicine, psychology, science, technology, sociology, culture, communications, and even sports, recreation, and leisure that are built on

Foucault's philosophical insights. His importance to modern thought about what it is to live as a human being cannot be overstated. Foucault is usually classified as a professional Historian, and Foucault's philosophy project is the chance outcome of his historical research into a few problems that he was interested in, including *language, sexuality, education, mental illness, and crime*. What he found turns around the usual way of thinking about these issues.

Take the problem of *crime*. Before Foucault's work in the 1970s and '80s, it was easy to think that there might be some differences today compared to the past (e.g., digital identity thieves instead of horse thieves), but *criminality is criminality*, and diligent experts are on their way to conquering it. Or take *mental illness*. Before Foucault, it seemed obvious that earlier people had a lot of stupid misconceptions about it — one was that hysteria was caused by a woman's womb breaking loose and floating around inside her body! But modern doctors and psychologists understand that mental illness, after all, is *simply mental illness*, and they are firmly on the road to curing it.

In other words, the common modern view was that there are serious universal human problems and that rational science was progressing toward the final objective truth about them: what causes these problems and what can cure them.

However, Foucault shows that a critical look at the historical record reverses this assumption. He shows that not only criminals and the mad, but even "normals" such as workers, soldiers and SOCES students, were all literally *conceived of* differently: that is, they would have been thought about differently and understood to be very different creatures at different times throughout the centuries. These earlier understandings were not the result of foolish misconceptions about the people involved and how to treat them, they were products of the way of thinking of their time. Earlier "truths," such as giving women ten-hour baths to settle their wombs down in the 18th century, were not the result of failing to have progressed "to a final understanding of the truth" (*History of Madness (HM)* xvi).

That is, earlier "truths" – beliefs held without question – were the result of contingent historical conditions: products of time and chance rather than reason or purpose.

Foucault demonstrates that instead of progress toward truth about human beings and their problems, there is only chance social change constructing what we believe to be Truth. And the inescapable conclusion for us today is that we have absolutely no reason to think that we are progressing toward any Truth about anything; today's true descriptions of the world could change tomorrow based on some new description. This historical insight explains why Foucault's project became the human subject.

In thinking about these changes in *truth claims*, consider the subject of matter in the physical world. We don't really hear SOCES students grumbling in the halls that they can't be sure what matter is made of in the universe. Today, most of them are confident that all of physical objects are made up of atoms and sub-atomic particles. Foucault's point is that there is just no way of determining whether a truth claim like this actually corresponds to what the universe is like, independent of our way of describing it, and that way will change over time, so we can't ever get to the Truth.



Perhaps tomorrow there will be a better way of describing the universe, and we'll all cringe in horror at how foolish we once were in thinking atoms composed matter, just like we now giggle out our ignorant 13th century physicians who cured demonic possession by drilling holes in their patients head! We should also realize that descriptions – even scientific ones, like those describing atoms – keep changing. The word “atom” stayed the same, but throughout the 20th century, how descriptions of what it referred to changed. First atoms were described as being “hard” (originally “atom” meant “unsplittable”), then atoms were described as “soft like pudding,” and then mainly as an “emptiness,” with “sub-atomic particles,” of varying numbers. So is there any reason to think that the latest scientific description of an “atom” is the accurate one, and that scientists won't come up with a different description tomorrow? Can you think of any reason to believe that scientists have finally arrived at the ultimate Truth about atoms? Since no one is able to set aside the latest descriptions of atoms, take a look at what is really out there independent our descriptions, and then determine whether there is a correspondence, how could we ever know?

What Foucault fundamentally has to say is that the human subject is a *subjugated being*, subjugated in a myriad of ways to social controls that contribute to her identity and determine how she thinks about herself and the world. In developing his ideas, he understood that *social institutions* are the basic—and necessary—mechanisms for assuring a society's survival.

That is, whether it is the government or the economy or education or religion or the family, all institutions aim at bringing human beings under control in various ways for the sake of social stability and survival.

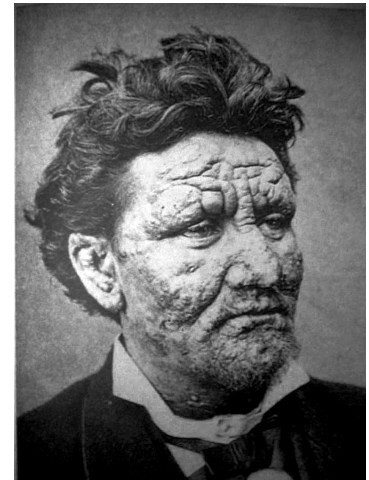
Foucault's research shows that the form this control takes is a product of particular *historical circumstances*, which in turn suggests that, since the individual is subject to these institutions from birth, her individual “self” is nothing more than a product of *descriptions* that arise and catch on at particular historical moments. More specifically, his research shows how a particular highly rationalized, truth-

seeking form of control has spread through all the institutions of Western culture in just the last few hundred years, since the Age of Reason, producing today's "**disciplinary society**." This, of course, is where the possibility of being the self-deceiving, power-hungry animal comes in.

In developing Foucault's ideas and developing questions to investigate regarding the issues they raise, we will discuss two of his best known historical studies – the histories of madness and of criminality – to provide the evidence from which his philosophy arises, and will end by making the case that the human subject (i.e., your "self," or your personal identity) is not the product of some inborn unchanging essence, but rather the contingent result of the beliefs and practices of particular historical moments. You will also find—and this is key—that Foucault's philosophy is empowering!

The History of Madness

"At the end of the Middle Ages, leprosy disappeared from the Western world" (*HM* 3). This is the opening line of Foucault's *History of Madness* (trans. 2006 (*HM*); first English trans. *Madness and Civilization*, 1965 (*MC*)). There was no background, no explanation, just this rather odd line. The book then launches into the "problems" that a cure for leprosy raised: what to do with all the leprosariums (large facilities that housed those with the disease) that would now be useless? – and, since lepers "made God manifest" (*HM* 5), where to turn for psychological reassurance that *not* being a leper was proof that you were a good, Godly, going-to-Heaven person when there were no longer any lepers around?



Today, it's hard to believe that people could have such mundane and selfish concerns when the trade-off was a cure for the grisly disease of leprosy, but that's exactly Foucault's point. His odd opening makes it clear that this is not your usual History book, but rather one that approaches the unfolding story of human life in a much more critical way, by forefronting the fact that people in other times and places thought about things very differently than we do here and now for reasons that had not previously been confronted. Foucault then goes on to tell us how people eventually solved the twin problems of the scapegoat and the empty leprosariums: they solved them with the *mad*—who, of course, are the subject of his book.

Study Questions

1. According to Foucault, what kind of an animal is *Homo sapiens*?
2. What is the “common modern view” that Foucault critiques in his postmodern histories?
3. How does Foucault instead view historical developments?
4. What does Foucault believe about finding Truth in the world and what’s “out there?” Use your own historical example to illustrate his point.

Vocabulary Development

What are seven-to-nine key terms that you’ve encountered so far? Try to define each, directly from the text if you can or from context if you cannot. Try not to use a dictionary.

Asking Questions

What questions can we ask Foucault about his major arguments? These are questions that arise *directly* from the text.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Developing Questions

Inquiry and investigation begin when my SOCES students encounter information about complex issues and problems that stimulates their intellectual curiosity. That's the purpose of AP Seminar! They then continue the research process by developing a critical question about one or more of those complex issues or ideas. Seeking answers to such questions requires exploration of numerous, often competing perspectives; the context surrounding those perspectives; and the reliability and credibility of the perspectives. Through this exploration, you will begin to develop your own perspective rather than simply accept those of others – especially mine! Powerful SOCES students will consider the purpose of their research — what is supposed to be achieved and why. Ideally, they also develop additional questions that lead to further inquiry. The intrinsic value of asking and answering questions cannot be overstated. In developing questions of inquiry, think about these points:

- How does the context of a problem or issue affect how it is interpreted or presented?
- How might others see the problem or issue differently?
- What questions have yet to be asked?
- What voices or perspectives are missing from my research?
- What do I want to know, learn, or understand?
- How does my research question shape how I go about trying to answer it?
- What information do I need to answer my question?
- What keywords should I use to search for information about this topic?

Let's start by recording some of the *subjects* Foucault touches upon in the reading, thus far.

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 4. |
| 2. | 5. |
| 3. | 6. |

Create three complex questions that could be investigated regarding any of these subjects; these are questions that arise *indirectly* from the text. Remember, questions can stretch between disciplines, and there should be something compelling about each that excites your own sense of curiosity. Good questions...

- require a judgment or evaluation to be made (not just description);
- are researchable (it is possible to find relevant and credible sources);
- involve genuine points of ongoing debate;
- invite engagement with alternative perspective;
- are simple and do not contain multiple, nested questions.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Revising Research Questions

Making sure the subject that sparked your curiosity is at the heart of your question, review the qualities of a good research question, and revise them with the help of your peers.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Practicing the Skill

Ultimately, you will be developing and then following through with your own research based on an original question of inquiry. This skill is therefore vital for all SOCES students serious about their own success as students and thinkers. Consider these two examples:

“Does having children adversely affect American women professionally?”

This is a weak question because the answer is implied, making it too narrow.

“Should American businesses be required to provide six-month paid maternity leave?”

This is a stronger question because there is no implied answer, yielding for broader potential when is it researched.

Revise these research questions:

1. What different attitudes do people around the world have to the relationship between parents and child?

Revision:

Rationale for this revision (Why is it a better question?):

2. Is euthanasia ever justifiable? If so, when?

Revision:

Rationale for this revision:

3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of nuclear power stations?

Revision:

Rationale for this revision:

4. Is cryogenics only an option for the rich as well as an immoral use of resources?

Revision:

Rationale for this revision:

5. The problems with South American education.

Revision:

Rationale for this revision:

Madness at the End of the Traditional World

So, what do we know about madness in the late Middle Ages? Much as ancient societies had singled out the mad (as well as those with illnesses such as epilepsy) to serve as seers or oracles, believing that their strangeness was a sign of being touched by the gods, at the end of the Christian Middle Ages it is not surprising that mad people who heard voices or had hallucinations were thought to have been touched by God. This connection to the supernatural explains the belief that the voice of madness might have a tragic wisdom that human beings should pay attention to. This thought inspires



some of Shakespeare's plays, where the audience is asked to listen to the ravings of King Lear or Ophelia. But, more generally, in the Middle Ages the mad were understood as people who behaved foolishly. Perhaps God made them that way because of "neglect of Christian virtues" (MC 13)—who knows? Given this Christian interpretation of madness, there was generally no concern to lock up the mad, nor was

there our modern sense of madness as a disorder that needs to be cured. Since the mad, too, were God's creatures, at the end of the traditional world they were generally just left to wander as they may.

Madness in the Early Modern World

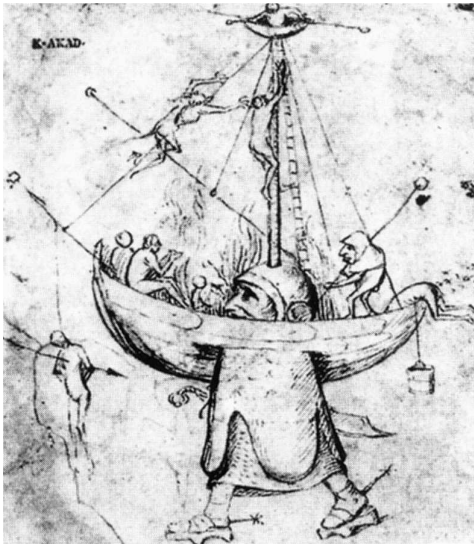
Times were changing, however, and Foucault recounts that, regardless of this Christian attitude, "a sudden unease... appears on the horizon of European culture towards the end of the Middle Ages" (HM 12) that would alter the Medieval understanding of madness and how to deal with it. Thus, at the beginning of the Renaissance we find, "Something new appears... the Ship of Fools, a strange 'drunken boat' that glides along the calm rivers" (MC 7) and that, for a fee, takes away a town's mad. "[T]hey did really exist, these boats that drifted from one town to another with their senseless cargo... Often the cities of Europe must have seen these 'ships of fools' approaching their harbors" (HM 9; MC 8). They symbolize the new "unease" in European thinking by which madness is no longer blamed on "neglect of Christian virtues but on a great unreason" (HM 13).



Why? To answer this, imagine yourself living back in the early Renaissance, just as the reason-based Scientific Revolution was getting going, when scientists and thinkers were beginning to recognize

the vast powers of human reason. Think how unsettling it would be to witness a human being who shows nothing but “unreason.” How would you think about this creature? How would you treat her?

Then think how disturbing it would be to recognize that *you* do quite a few irrational things yourself!



Could that be a frightening sign that you, too, might be going mad? Foucault suggests, “Navigation brought man face to face with the uncertainty of destiny, where each is left to himself and every departure might always be the last” (*MC* 10; *HM* 11). The crucial point about the early Renaissance is that Reason was becoming God as European thinking became more and more rooted in reason.

In this historical context, it is easy to see why madness might be thought about through its description as *unreason*, and why, for a century or so, the mad were pushed away— “out of sight, out of mind,” as the saying goes.

How is this seemingly unsympathetic treatment reconciled with Christian values? Foucault suggests that the ships may have been thought about as “pilgrimage boats, [carrying] highly symbolic cargoes of madmen in search of their reason” (*MC* 9); “to hand a madman over to sailors... made sure that he would go far away... But water adds to this... its own values; it carries off, but it does more: it purifies...” (*MC* 10; *HM* 11). Perhaps the madman would be “purified” by the time he reached a foreign shore, or perhaps the townspeople who sent him away would be “purified” and save themselves from madness.

This superstitious attitude is not surprising because people were only starting, during the early Renaissance, to shake off the old traditional belief that an individual’s fate was beyond her control—something that Shakespeare shows us in *Romeo and Juliet*, where the “star-cross’d” lovers seem powerless to avoid their tragic ends. Foucault describes this old Medieval preoccupation with death, noting, “until the end of the fifteenth century... the death theme reigns supreme. The end of mankind and the end of time are everywhere; they are seen in war and the plagues. Hanging over human existence is an order and an end that no man can escape, a menacing presence from within the world itself” (*HM* 14).

Yet things were changing fast in the early Modern World. By the time of the late Renaissance, people were becoming so confident about their rationality that the old view about mysterious forces acting on human beings faded. As Foucault puts it:

[T]hat great uncertainty [about one's fate] spun on its axis, and the [mockery] of madness took over from the seriousness of death. From the knowledge of that fatal necessity that reduces man to dust, we pass to a contemptuous contemplation of the nothingness that is life itself. The fear before the absolute limit of death becomes interiorized [and tamed]... Suddenly, [madness] was there to be discerned in the mannerisms, failings and vices of normal people... It is still the nothingness of existence that is at stake, but this nothingness is no longer experienced as an end exterior to [existence on Earth], a threat and a conclusion: it is felt from within, as a continuous and unchanging form of life... [so that] now wisdom meant denouncing folly wherever it was to be found... (HM 14-15)



Foucault shows that the new self-conscious, reason-dominated individual of the late Renaissance understands madness to be simply an extreme *delusion* that some people suffer from:

In a general way... madness is... linked... to man, to his weaknesses, dreams, and illusions... In this delusive attachment to himself, man generates his madness like a mirage. The symbol of madness will henceforth be that mirror which, without reflecting anything real, will secretly offer the man who observes himself in it the dream of his own presumption. Madness deals not so much with truth and the world, as with man and whatever truth about himself he is able to perceive. (MC, 21)

The presence of the occasional madman will no longer make people fear for their own sanity, so he will no longer need to be shipped away. People lose their fear of madness as they become comfortable with being the “rational animal.” Yes, they may do some irrational things from time to time, but that is just part of what it is to be a human being living in the world.

The Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch captures this more confident attitude in his famous *Ship of Fools* (ca. 1500, right), showing us a bunch of normal human beings on board the ship just playing around, getting drunk and acting silly. And yet, like human beings in general, and like many of you and like me, and like the rest of your SOCES teachers and even your parents, they are fools who go on

taking their lives seriously in an absurd world: a world whose social institutions are the result of contingent historical forces without an ultimate truth in how to think about anything at all! Thus, as the traditional fear of powerful forces that are in control of the world fades and reason starts to dominate Western thinking, the ship of fools reminds the “non-mad” of their *own* kind of madness: when you look at the madman’s senselessness, it reminds you of your own!

The madman becomes important because he “reminds each man [he is]... in a comedy where each man deceives the other and dupes himself” (*MC* 14). Think here of what Shakespeare says in *Macbeth*’s great speech: Yes, you will “strut and fret your hour on the stage,” pretending to be this or that kind of person, but in reality you are a “poor player” [actor], and your life story is nothing more than “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”

The “conditions of possibility” for this new, late Renaissance description and treatment of madness can be found in the historical context of a growing dependence on human rationality. Reason began to dominate human thinking under the influence of developing science and technology (that is, the Scientific Revolution), plus the influence of long lost Classical knowledge that was just then re-entering Europe (especially early science and the rational philosophies of Plato and Aristotle).

Also helping to explain the new focus on human reason was the growing literacy rate, following the 15th-century development of the moveable type printing press. Literate people, and especially highly



literate people, are able to separate themselves from their daily situation and think more abstractly, more categorically, more skeptically and critically. This helps them move away from superstitious explanations for the way things are. Finally, fading into the background in the late Renaissance, were the seemingly uncontrollable crowd diseases, destruction of towns and crops by raiders, and so on, that had convinced people in the Middle Ages they were helpless victims of fate.

Eventually, all the new knowledge produced by systematic reasoning seemed so persuasive that faith in the power of reason began to replace religious and secular authority, tradition, and common superstitions as *the* necessary guide for human life.

One of the recovered texts from Antiquity makes a clever comparison of man to other animals to illustrate the way reason could serve as a guide: just as speed is natural to horses, horns to bulls and stingers to bees, reason is natural to human beings, so—analogously to horses, bulls and bees—human

beings need to use reason in their live. Whereas an individual's fate had formerly been understood to be out of her control, during the scientific, rational Renaissance it begins to be seen as hers to determine.

With this picture of the newly confident rational human being in mind, it isn't surprising that madness no longer scared people, and that the ships of fools became unnecessary. The late Renaissance *way of thinking* about madness responds to the West's transition from the old traditional world where people just accepted things, based on tradition and faith in divine guidance and other established authority, to a modern world where they are guided by their own reason and the new knowledge that reason makes possible. As this confident way of rational thinking spread, the mad were no longer a matter of particular concern and, once again, were left on their own, to wander as they may. Keep in mind Foucault's argument in all this: objectively, the behavior of the mad did not change, but how we *thought* of them did, and this was the result of a complex web of forces that had nothing to do with directly pointing toward the causes of madness or the best way to handle their treatment.

Study Questions

Madness at the End of the Traditional World

- 1a. What was the traditional Western attitudes toward madness, and what was it connected with at the end of the traditional world?
- 1b. How did they think they should respond to "the voice of madness" at that time?

Madness in the Early Modern World

- 2a. What were Westerners beginning to think about what should guide them in life when the "ships of fools" began to appear?
- 2b. What was madness now "attributed to"?
3. In his painting of a ship of fools, what does Bosch suggest about normal human life?
4. What does Macbeth's great speech remind you about your own life?

Madness in the Later Modern World

“Discontinuity”—Foucault’s observation that societies sometimes stop thinking about something as they had been and start to think about it differently — rears its head again in the early Age of Reason. Specifically, fears about losing one’s reason had disappeared, but so did every trace of the more relaxed approach to madness whereby the mad were allowed to wander as they may.

What happened is that dependence on a rational way of life was becoming obsessive.

The love affair with reason soon produced the Hôpital Général, which “opened its collective doors to the poor, the sick, the vagrant and the mad men and women of Paris in 1656... By a strange act of force, the [early Age of Reason] was to reduce to silence the madness whose voices the Renaissance had just liberated...” (MC 38).



Foucault writes that people confined in an Hôpital Général, such as Salpêtrière (right), were entrusted to administrators:

[Administrators were] appointed for life, who exercised their powers not only in the buildings of the Hôpital but throughout the city of Paris, over all those who came under their jurisdiction: “They have all the power of authority, ...of correction and punishment...” The [administrators] also appointed a doctor... to... visit each of the housed of the Hôpital twice a week. From the very start, one thing is clear: the Hôpital is not a medical establishment. It is rather a sort of semi-judicial structure, an administrative entity.” (MC 40)

Such institutional confinement is new in the early Age of Reason. Specifically, this is an extremely rationalized, systematic way of dealing with a whole class of people that includes the mad, people who deviated from the social norm by not working. Foucault emphasizes that:

[I]n its functioning, or in its purpose, the Hôpital Général had nothing to do with any medical concept. It was an instance of order, of the monarchical and bourgeois [and industrial capitalist] order being organized in France during this period... This structure... with its organization in absolutist forms soon extended its network over the whole of France. An edict of the king, dated June 16, 1676, prescribed the establishment of an “hôpital général in each city of his kingdom.” (MC 40-41)

And in what came to be called “the great confinement,” this rational way of dealing with madness by confinement soon spread throughout Europe. Whereas in earlier times the mad were left to

wander about the countryside or perhaps be sent away on ships of fools, in the early Age of Reason they were locked up!

How can we explain such a radically different way of dealing with this problem? In discussing the emergence of *yet another understanding of madness* and how to treat it, Foucault looks at *historical developments* that got under way at the beginning of the Age of Reason.

In particular, he emphasizes that industrial capitalism was replacing the traditional agriculture-based economic system at this time.

This is a development that Max Weber (left) has famously analyzed, arguing that capitalism took off under the influence of new Protestant ideas that proclaimed hard work to be what God has “called”



people to do. This idea—which Weber terms “*the Protestant ethic*”—encouraged people to take their work seriously “for the glory of God,” and to save and invest the rewards of their labor. Looking at this historical context, it’s easy to see how “the great confinement” could meet the needs of this rising industrial capitalist society by achieving greater social control.

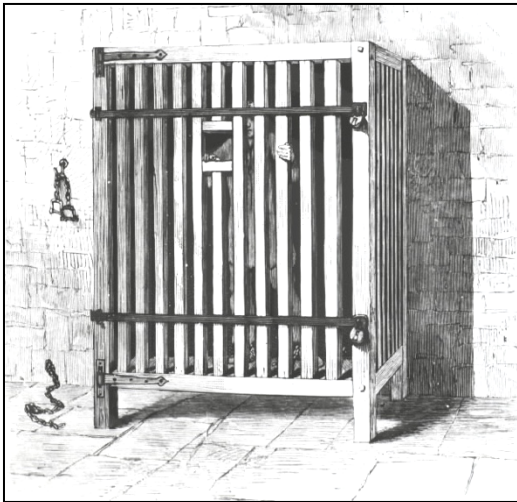
To preserve social stability, all the deviants who did not work and thus were useless to the new industrial economy were locked up in the old leprosariums out of the public eye, the new problems of idleness *and* what to do with the old lepers’ quarters apparently solved. Out of sight, out of mind. Again!

It was... a new solution. For the first time, purely negative measures of exclusion were replaced by a measure of confinement; the [non-working] person was no longer driven away or punished; he was taken in charge, at the expense of the nation but at the cost of his individual liberty... It is this entire, rather undifferentiated mass at which the edict of 1657 [forbidding all begging in Paris] is aimed: a population without resources... rejected or rendered mobile by new economic developments... Throughout Europe, confinement had the same meaning... It constituted one of the answers the seventeenth century gave to an economic crisis that affected the entire Western world... (MC 48-51)

Foucault continues by noting that the *inmates* were meant to “[contribute] to the prosperity of all” by working. This system of extracting labor from the confined was for the most part unprofitable, but there are two points we should keep in mind when considering the connection between a new way of thinking about madness and this social system of confinement.

First, we should not romanticize the mad (any more than the homeless) when we think about them being locked up, forgetting that *some* of them may be dangerous. Second, it is worth noting that the new description of madness is influenced by the Protestant religion and the new economic order of profit-making capitalism, which are not obviously connected to people who happen to be mad.

A connection, of course, is that a direct economic payoff from forced labor was not the primary consideration in a society dominated by Protestantism and its hard-work ethic. Foucault asks:



Does not reluctance to work mean “trying beyond measure the power of God,” as Calvin says?... This is why idleness is rebellion... Pride was the sin of man before the Fall; but the sin of idleness is the supreme pride of man once he has fallen... Labor in the houses of confinement thus assumed its ethical meaning: since sloth [laziness] had become the absolute form of rebellion, the idle would be forced to work... It is not immaterial that madmen were included in the [banning] of idleness. From its origin, they would have their place beside the poor, deserving or not, and the idle, voluntary or not. Like them, [the mad] would be subject to the rules of forced labor. (MC 56-8)

In tracing the *history of madness*, Foucault then turns to the middle of the Age of Reason. At this time, the **rationalization** and **bureaucratization** of Western society continued, and the mad now were segregated from *other* deviants. This happened because in “the workshops... they distinguished themselves by their inability to work and to follow the rhythms of collective life (MC 58).” In other words, the mad, unlike thieves or vagrants, were actually *not* able to work. They lacked the ability to submit to the routines of normal daily life, to control themselves rationally and live normally in society.

Thus, Foucault shows that the mad were now thought about as creatures who do not possess the characteristics of a rational human being. Now, in the middle Age of Reason they were regarded as irrational animals who must be locked up in special institutions of their own.

The contrast with the Renaissance is dramatic:

In the Renaissance, madness was present everywhere and mingled with every experience by its images or its dangers. During the [middle of the Age of Reason], madness was shown, but on the other side of bars; if present, it was at a distance, under the eyes of a reason that no longer felt any relation to it... Madness had become a thing to look at: no longer a monster inside oneself, but an animal... (MC 70)

Because of the madman's perceived "bestiality... madness had less than ever to do with medicine, and precious little to do with correction either. Unchained bestiality could only be *tamed* or *trained*"—it was not an "illness" to be cured (*HM*, 149).

Foucault demonstrates his point with this:

[T]he case of a "very famous monastic establishment, in one of the southern regions of France," where a violent madman would be given "a precise order to change"; if he refused to go to bed or to eat, he "was warned that obstinacy... would be punished on the next day with ten strokes of the bullwhip"... Thus... the free animality of madness could only be tamed, and not so that the beast might become human again, but to restore man to what is exclusively animal in him. ...In the reduction to animality, madness finds both its truth and its cure; when the madman has become a beast this presence of the animal in man, a presence which constituted the scandal of madness, is eliminated: not that the animal is silenced, but man himself is abolished [from the madman]. (*MC* 75-6; *HM* 149-50)

On this view, which dominated the middle of the Age of Reason, Man himself did not exist in the madman, and so it made sense to think about him and therefore treat him like an animal.

However, at the end of the Age of Reason, around the end of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th, another great change began to take place in the understanding of madness and how to deal with it.

Study Questions - *Madness in the Later Modern World*

1. By the later Renaissance, what does the "self-conscious, reason-dominated individual" conclude about madness?
- 2a. What is the first thing that Foucault emphasizes about what happened to the voice of madness during the Age of Reason?
- 2b. What was the more rational way of dealing with the mad?
- 3a. What was "the great confinement" that occurred at the beginning of the Age of Reason?
- 3b. What was madness not associated with at this time?
- 3c. What was the purpose of the great confinement?
4. Describe the religious thought that influenced the new way madness was perceived during the Age of Reason.
5. Describe the economic situation also influenced the new view of madness and how it should be dealt with.
- 6a. How did Westerners view the madman during the late Age of Reason?
- 6b. What did they no longer think when they saw a madman?

Record some of the *subjects* Foucault touches upon in this section of the reading: pages 8-16.

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Create three complex questions that could be investigated regarding any of these subjects; these are questions that arise *indirectly* from the text. Remember, questions can stretch between disciplines, and there should be something compelling about each that excites your own sense of curiosity. Good questions...

- require a judgment or evaluation to be made (not just description);
- are researchable (it is possible to find relevant and credible sources);
- involve genuine points of ongoing debate;
- invite engagement with alternative perspective;
- are simple and do not contain multiple, nested questions.

1.

2.

3.

Revising Research Questions

Making sure the subject that sparked your curiosity is at the heart of your question, review the qualities of a good research question, and revise them with the help of your peers.

1.

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3.

Tuke's Retreat

We know the images. They are familiar in all histories of psychiatry, where their function is to illustrate that happy age when madness was finally recognized and treated according to a truth to which we had too long remained blind.

....“This house [Dr. Tuke’s “Retreat”] is situated a mile from York [England], in the midst of fertile and smiling country-side; it is not at all the idea of a prison that it suggests, but rather that of a large farm; it is surrounded by a great, walled garden. No bars, no grilles on the windows.” (MC 241)

On a similar English “farm” (below), established in 1776 by Dr. Francis Willis, a visitor was:

astonished to find almost all the surrounding plowmen, gardeners, threshers, thatchers and other laborers attired [like gentlemen] in black coats, white waistcoats, black silk breaches and stockings, and the head of each bewigged, well powdered” neat and arranged. These were the doctor’s patients with dress, neatness of person, and exercise being a principle feature of his admirable treatment system where health and cheerfulness conjoined to aid recovery of every person attached to that most valuable asylum.



This new treatment during the late Age of Reason derived from a new understanding of madness that described the mad as full human beings who merely failed to exercise rational self-control, and the prescribed treatment was lessons in regulating themselves under the close and rigorous supervision of the new “mad doctors.”



Rather than animals to be caged and whipped, they were human beings to be cured by experts.

In the historical context of the late Age of Reason, it is easy to see the way the experts’ thinking might have gone. First, certainty about the unsurpassed value of human reason was at an all-time high, so it could easily be concluded that reason is the

one thing that makes human beings significantly different from other animals.

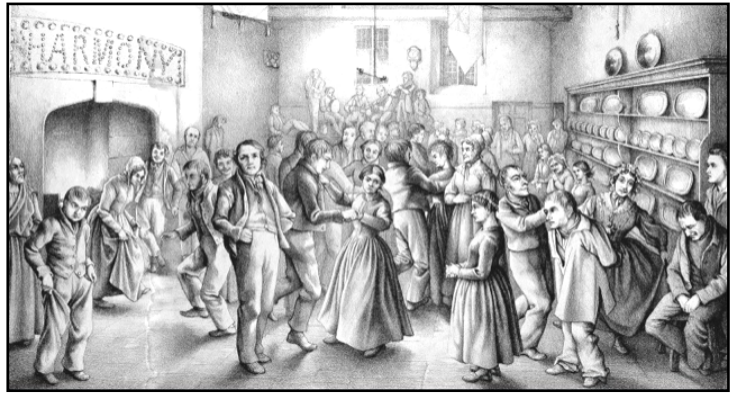
On this view, every human being —by definition—possesses reason. It therefore makes no sense to treat mad human beings as if they did not possess reason; instead, the mad just needed to be *restored* to their natural rational selves.

Institutions such as Tuke's and Willis's (pictured above) were designed to provide a structured environment for the inmates to practice working and behaving properly around others, preparing themselves to re-enter normal, rational society.

When we first encounter these late Age of Reason ideas about “philanthropic” efforts to “liberate” the mad from their chains and cages, the Western common-sense belief that reason brings progress seems well placed. *Isn't* it progress—this more “humanitarian” attitude toward the insane? After all, they are *not* lower animals; human beings *do* have reason, even if they do not always use it, and they must therefore be treated humanely. Yet for Foucault, the issue is not that simple: not an either/or. Perhaps the concept of humaneness clouds the issue for SOCES students living in the 21st century, but what the *historical* records of these late Age of Reason institutions show is quite different from progress toward the Truth about madness or human nature in any *absolute* sense. In discussing Tuke's Retreat in greater detail, Foucault emphasizes what the “close supervision” noted above actually entailed. The institution was a highly rationalized “instrument of... moral and religious segregation that sought to reconstruct around madness a milieu” of normality through extremely rigorous rational, systematic strategies:

[A] religious and moral milieu was imposed from without, in such a way that madness was controlled, not cured... Religious segregation... [puts] the insane individual within a moral element where he will be in debate with himself and his surroundings: to constitute for him a milieu where, far from being protected, he will be kept in a perpetual anxiety, ceaselessly threatened by Law and Transgression. [As Tuke said: “The principle of fear, which is rarely decreased by insanity, is considered as of great importance in the management of the patients.”] ... The observation Tuke now instituted... pursued in the madman the [tiniest] signs of his madness... There were social occasions in the English manner, where everyone was obliged to imitate all the formal requirements of social existence [to] spy out any incongruity, any disorder, any awkwardness where madness might betray itself. The directors and staff of the Retreat thus regularly invited several patients to “tea-parties” [the picture below, of a “lunatics’ ball,” is in this vein]...

We see that at the Retreat the partial suppression of physical constraint was part of a system whose essential element was the constitution of a “self-restraint” in which the patient’s freedom, engaged by work and the observation of others, was ceaselessly threatened by the recognition of guilt... [in which] one was in the grip of a [productive] operation that confined madness in a system of rewards and punishments, and included it in the movement of moral consciousness. A passage from a world of Censure to a universe of Judgment. But thereby a psychology of madness becomes possible, for under observation madness is... judged only by its acts.



Madness is responsible only for that part of itself that is visible. All the rest is reduced to silence. Madness no longer exists except as *seen* [by the “gaze” of the rational expert].

Surveillance and Judgment: already the outline appears of a new personage [the rational expert] who will be essential in the 19th-century asylum. Tuke himself suggests this personage, when he tells the story of a maniac subject to... violence. One day while he was walking in the garden... with the keeper, this patient suddenly entered a phase of excitation, moved several steps away, picked up a large stone, and made the gesture of throwing it... The keeper stopped, looked the patient in the eyes; then advanced several steps toward him and “in a resolute tone of voice... commanded him to lay down the stone”; ...the patient...dropped his weapon... Something had been born, which was no longer repression, but authority. ...The space reserved by society for insanity would now be haunted by those... who represented both the prestige of the authority that confines and the rigor of the reason that judges. The keeper intervenes, without weapons, [usually] without instruments of constraint, with observation and language... [Thus] the 19th-century asylum is not unreason liberated, but madness... mastered.... (MC 244-53)

What has evolved in the understanding and treatment of the mad is a rationalized system of control – control in the name of the social norm and the all-knowing expert authority that enforces it.

Note, too, that *it was not based on any “truth” about madness*, for the mad really could not consistently control themselves. Rather, the new system of control is related to the story most people told themselves during the late Age of Reason about the unlimited power of human rationality, a comforting *story* (a description) that blinded them to the important fact that the mad really were incapable of self-

control. As Foucault indicates, another story could be told about such institutions, one told through the “silenced” voices of the mad themselves, who might have said that their misery was increased by the additional burden of moral guilt for their failure at self-control.

This point about “*silenced*” voices is an important one throughout all of Foucault’s work. In the modern regime of the rational Experts, those voices, the ones of patients in hospitals, criminals in prisons, or students and teachers in high schools, or even your own parents, rarely if ever matter. Most important by far is the voice of the Ph.D. in the University or laboratory or government office: the one with the knowledge that gives him the power to tell us the Truth. Of course if you’re sick we all know you’re better off taking the drugs developed by medical science than those offered by an addict on the corner, and an engineer will do a better job of building safe bridges than the homeless guy who lives under them. But Foucault’s point is that an ultra-rational approach to everything in the name of the Experts’ Truth doesn’t always yield the best outcome because the Truths those Experts base their decisions on continue to change. The best decisions we are told to follow right now is just one in a long line of decisions that will no doubt continue to evolve over time. For Foucault, uncritical prejudice that favors the Experts’ voice gets in the way of improving things. And, just as bad, the over-rationalization of society has created a crushing, bureaucratic form of life that now dominates how we live in the world.

Study Questions

Tuke’s Retreat

At the very end of the Age of Reason, with the emergence of Tuke’s Retreat:

1. How is the madman seen?
2. What is the goal of treatment?
3. What are two key methods which are used to achieve this goal?
4. For Foucault, what does Tuke, the “new personage” who appears at this time, “represent”?

Record some of the *subjects* Foucault touches upon in this section of the reading: pages 18-20.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Create two complex questions that could be investigated regarding any of these subjects; these are questions that arise *indirectly* from the text. Remember, questions can stretch between disciplines, and there should be something compelling about each that excites your own sense of curiosity. Good questions...

- require a judgment or evaluation to be made (not just description);
- are researchable (it is possible to find relevant and credible sources);
- involve genuine points of ongoing debate;
- invite engagement with alternative perspective;
- are simple and do not contain multiple, nested questions.

- 1.
- 2.

Revising Research Questions

Making sure the subject that sparked your curiosity is at the heart of your question, review the qualities of a good research question, and revise them with the help of your peers.

- 1.
- 2.

Understanding and Analysis: The Rhetorical Précis

Developing understanding starts with comprehension of the concepts and perspectives under examination. Being able to summarize by identifying and explaining the salient ideas in a text is foundational. When you summarize and explain an author's perspective to others, whether a single reader or an audience, you are building understanding. We all must comprehend a perspective or argument in order to be able to analyze it. That analysis — including consideration of the author's point of view and purpose, the reasoning and details the author selects, develops, and conveys, and the way the author chooses to situate those details — in turn leads to greater understanding of the topic or concept being explored. One may evaluate the strength of an argument by examining the line of reasoning and the quality of the evidence the author uses. This level of understanding will allow you to recognize the implications and predict the consequences of an argument.

- As we practice the skill of analysis, these essential questions can help guide how we think about an argument and text.
- What strategies will help me comprehend a text?
- What is the argument's main idea and what reasoning does the author use to develop it?
- Why might the author view the issue this way?
- What biases may the author have that influence his or her perspective?
- Does this argument acknowledge other perspectives?
- How do I know if a source is trustworthy?
- What are the implications of these arguments?
- How does this conclusion impact me and my community? Or my research?

Writing an Analysis: The Rhetorical Précis

(Much thanks to Max Cecil, my great friend, for help with this. Margaret Woodworth (1988) also deserves credit.)

In order to help us quickly and effectively describe the argument an author is making in a given work — an essay, a speech, an image, a performance, etc. — we will be using a method of analytical writing called the ***rhetorical précis*** (pronounced pray-see). “Précis” is French for “specific” or “precise,” and when writing a rhetorical précis, your goal should be to succinctly account for the most important parts of an author's argument. Yet unlike a summary, a précis shouldn't just focus on *what* an author says, but also *how* they say it and *why* they say it.

Writing a précis can help you in a number of ways. Used in conjunction with active reading (i.e., annotating), it guides your reading and directs your attention to the key aspects of a text. Précis writing also prepares you to discuss a text and sets you up for that important next step: analysis. A rhetorical précis can even help you structure an annotated bibliography—a key component of any research project, and one we will practice in AP Seminar.

This genre of writing was originally developed by Margaret K. Woodworth and described in a 1988 article for *Rhetoric Review*, consists of four short — but detailed — sentences. It will look like a complete grammatical paragraph. In AP Seminar, we're going to add a fifth. Here is a brief summary of what you'll need to do in each *complete* sentence:

1. Introduce the writer or speaker, the work, and the central claim.

2. Explain an author's line of reasoning, i.e., how they develop their argument.
3. State the author's purpose in making the work.
4. Describe the intended audience and the author's relationship to the audience.
5. Explain the significance of the work.

Let's review each of these sentences in more detail.

The First Sentence: Introduce the author, the work, and the central claim.

Start by identifying the author and offering any information that might help clarify who this person is in relation to this text. Is this a scholar? If so, what is her field? Is she a public official or a prominent blogger? Is he a public intellectual? A reporter? A spokesperson? Has she written other stuff? Locate a bio in the journal, in the introduction to the text, or the book cover. Do a quick internet search. Figuring out who writer this is will help you understand some of the texts' context.

Next, name the publication. What is its title? Is it a book in a series or an article in a special collection? Does it appear in the leisure section of a local newspaper? Sometimes the title of the journal is self-explanatory, but at other times it's unfamiliar, metaphoric, or not clearly connected to a specific discipline. Explain it as necessary. Add the date in parentheses after the title of the text. Unless it's a newspaper, magazine, or time sensitive online article, usually just the year will suffice.

The rest of the sentence should be about the article's topic: its subject. In order to make this part particularly precise, use a rhetorically strong *verb* (e.g. "argues," "asserts," "challenges," etc.) to describe the author's claim.

The Second Sentence: Explain an author's line of reasoning.

In this sentence, provide a condensed outline of how the author develops, structures, and supports the argument. What kind of evidence does the argument draw upon? How is the case built? Perhaps by comparing and contrasting, illustrating, defining, or providing context? Perhaps the text starts out with a narrative or anecdote and then moves into a description of several research studies. This sentence should account for all the most important rhetorical and structural moves made across this piece.

The Third Sentence: State the author's purpose.

What does the writer want the reader to do, believe, feel, or think about all this? What was the purpose of this text? In the first sentence, you told your reader what that author is arguing; now it is time to consider *why* the author has done all of this. Use an "in order to" phrase in this sentence to clearly indicate the purpose.

The Fourth Sentence: Describe the intended audience.

In the fourth sentence, identify the author's intended audience and offer some rationale for *how you know* that to be the audience. Look back at the publication and think about who is likely to read this kind of magazine, journal, or book. Pay attention to the language used in this piece and how much background the writer provides. What does the writer assume

readers believe, know, or value? Identifying the audience helps you consider how rhetorically effective this text is.

The Fifth Sentence: Explain the significance of the work.

In the fifth and final sentence, state what you believe to be the significance of the author's argument. Why should someone care about the argument? Does it help us to better understand some unexplained phenomena? Does it challenge preconceived wisdom about a topic or issue? Does it stimulate new thinking? Does it provide a solution to a current problem?

As you use the rhetorical précis during the research process in AP Seminar, you might consider using this final sentence to indicate the significance of the work within the larger context of your research project. How does any particular source help you answer your own research inquiry? To what extent does it confirm, challenge, or modify common-sense perspectives found in other sources?

Below is a sample rhetorical précis that closely follows the structure outlined above:

In the Declaration of Independence (1776), Thomas Jefferson, an American statesman and philosopher, argues that the God-given rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness entitle the colonists to freedom from the oppressive British government and guarantee them the right to declare independence. He supports his claim by first invoking the fact that human beings possess inalienable rights, then he establishes the circumstances under which a people can throw off an oppressive government; he next proceeds to show that these circumstances have been created by King George III whose oppressive rule now forces the colonists to the separation. The purpose of this document is to convince all readers of the necessity to officially declare independence from Great Britain in order to establish a separate independent nation, the United States of America. Jefferson establishes a passionate and challenging tone for a worldwide audience, but particularly the British and King George III. This work is significant for at least two reasons: first, because it establishes the founding principles of the United States of America; and second, because its words inspired numerous democratic revolutions throughout world history.

On the next page is a framework for the rhetorical précis that you can easily adapt to the specifics any written, visual, or audio work. You may want to consider using it as a “fill-in-the-blanks template” until you are more comfortable with the format.

Rhetorical Précis Framework

In _____ (date), _____, _____,
(title of work) (author's full name) (author's
credentials)

_____ that _____.
(rhetorical verb – see column A) (central assertion or thesis)

He/She/They supports his/her/their _____ by first
(claim, assertion, argument, etc.)

_____, then _____,
(verb w/ description to describe a line of reasoning** – see column B) (description with reasoning verb from
column B)

next _____, and finally _____.
(description with reasoning verb from column B) (description with reasoning verb from
column B)

_____’s purpose is to _____ in order to
(author’s last name) (description of purpose)

_____. He/She/They _____
(description with a verb describing its purpose – see column C) (the medium: e.g. write, speak, paint,
etc.)

in a(n) _____ tone for _____.
(adjective describing tone – see column D) (the intended audience)

This work is significant because _____.
(explanation of the work’s importance)

** Note that the number of clauses in the second sentence will depend on the length and complexity of an author’s argument. Use as many verbs from column B as you find necessary to accurately and succinctly outline the argument.

Rhetorical Précis Word Bank

(A) rhetorically accurate verbs	(B) verbs to describe a line of reasoning	(C) in order to . . .	(D) adjectives to describe tone
argues asserts claims explains implies suggests questions	comparing . . . contrasting . . . defining . . . describing . . . exploring . . . explaining . . . illustrating . . .	convince inform persuade point out demonstrate that show suggest that	formal earnest grave humorous concerned informal serious

Practice: Writing a Précis

Using the “Rhetorical Précis Framework,” complete a précis for pages _____. (Complicating this task, keep in mind it is a secondary source; I am the author. This is not uncommon for longer, complicated works, and when you are writing, think about the arguments presented, the evidence used, and choices made to present Foucault’s arguments.)

Developing Questions

Now that we've concluded our readings on Foucault, we're going to return to our first set of inquiries to pull out subjects to discuss during seminar. After identifying a few subjects, we'll create and revise questions that will lead to a rich class discussion.

Let's start by recording some of the *subjects* Foucault touches upon, using all our readings.

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 5. |
| 2. | 6. |
| 3. | 7. |
| 4. | 8. |

Next, create two complex questions that could be investigated regarding any of the subjects you pulled from Foucault; these may be questions that arise *directly* or *indirectly* from the text. Remember, questions can stretch between disciplines, and there should be something compelling about each that excites your own sense of curiosity. Remember, good questions...

- require a judgment or evaluation to be made (not just description);
- are researchable (it is possible to find relevant and credible sources);
- involve genuine points of ongoing debate;
- invite engagement with alternative perspective;
- are simple and do not contain multiple, nested questions.

1.

2.

Revising Research Questions

Making sure the subject that sparked your curiosity is at the heart of your question, review the qualities of a good research question, and revise them with the help of your peers.

1.

2.

Seminar

Within your group, pick the question you would like to debate in a formal class seminar. You will be able to briefly research your response to the seminar question and collect your thoughts ahead of time.

Final Seminar Question

Rationale: Why did you select this question, and why is it the best question for a rich class debate?

Source B

The Storytelling Animal: “Boys and Girls”



First Mariner Books edition 2013

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“Boys and Girls”

Vivian Paley is a MacArthur Foundation “genius award” winner who has been writing about her experiences as a preschool and kindergarten teacher for decades. In her small masterpiece of kiddie anthropology, *Boys and Girls: Superheroes in the Doll Corner*, Paley describes a yearlong experiment in the psychology of gender. But Paley didn’t set out to run an experiment. Her main goal was just to make her class work better, and for that to happen, she needed the boys to behave. In Paley’s classroom, the boys were agents of chaos and entropy. They dominated the block corner, where they constructed battleships, starships, and other engines of war and then deployed them in loud, dire battles. The girls kept to the doll corner, where they decked themselves out in dress-up clothes, took care of their babies, chatted about their boyfriends, and usually managed to lure over a boy or two to play the roles of princes or fathers.

Paley was born in 1929. Her teaching career spanned massive changes in the fabric of American culture, not least of all in the standard gender roles of men and women. Yet over her career, pretend play hardly changed at all. As Paley’s career progressed from the 1950s through the 2000s, women moved into the workforce and men took on duties at home. But in Paley’s classroom, the calendar always seemed to be stuck at 1955. The children were precious little embodiments of gender stereotypes.



Paley—a loving teacher and a wonderfully sensitive observer of children—*hated* this. Her career was spent mainly at the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, where the values of the whole institution aligned squarely with Paley’s own liberal leanings. The parents of Paley’s students mainly avoided buying their daughters Barbie dolls for fear of encouraging unhealthy body images, and few allowed their boys to play with toy guns.

Paley watched in dismay as gender roles slowly hardened in her classroom. The girls were just so . . . *girlie*. They played dolls; they pined for their princes; they rarely ran or wrestled or shouted; they often told stories about bunnies and magical pink hippos. And the boys were so . . . *boyish*. They sprinted and shouted and happily rioted; they shot the whole room full of imaginary bullet holes and scorched it with bombs. Denied toy guns, the boys fashioned them out of vaguely gun-shaped objects such as crayons, and when teachers confiscated those, the boys still had their fingers.

Worst of all, when the boys played pirates or robbers, they needed what all hard men need most: victims. And what better victims could there be than the girls? The boys were constantly slashing or blasting their way into the doll corner, dealing death and dragging away spoils. This would often drive the girls to tears—not so much because they disliked being shot or robbed, but because the boys were ruining their own fantasies. It is hard to play Cinderella when Darth Vader and his stormtroopers keep crashing the ball.

Paley's book *Boys and Girls* is about the year she spent trying to get her pupils to behave in a more unisex way. And it is a chronicle of spectacular and amusing failure. None of Paley's tricks or bribes or clever manipulations worked. For instance, she tried forcing the boys to play in the doll corner and the girls to play in the block corner. The boys proceeded to turn the doll corner into the cockpit of a starship, and the girls built a house out of blocks and resumed their domestic fantasies.

Paley's experiment culminated in her declaration of surrender to the deep structures of gender. She decided to let the girls be girls. She admits, with real self-reproach, that this wasn't that hard for her: Paley always approved more of the girls' relatively calm and prosocial play. It was harder to let the boys be boys, but she did. "Let the boys be robbers," Paley concluded, "or tough guys in space. It is the natural, universal, and essential play of little boys."

I've been arguing that children's pretend play is relentlessly focused on trouble. And it is. But as Melvin Konner demonstrates in his monumental book *The Evolution of Childhood*, there are reliable sex differences in how boys and girls play that have been found around the world. Dozens of studies across five decades and a multitude of cultures have found essentially what Paley found in her midwestern classroom: boys and girls spontaneously segregate themselves by sex; boys engage in much more rough-and-tumble play; fantasy play is more frequent in girls, more sophisticated, and more focused on pretend parenting; boys are generally more aggressive and less nurturing than girls, with the differences being present and measurable by the seventeenth month of life. The psychologists Dorothy and Jerome Singer sum up this research: "Most of the time we see clear-cut differences in the way children play. Generally, boys are more vigorous in their activities, choosing games of adventure, daring, and conflict, while girls tend to choose games that foster nurturance and affiliation."

The Neverland boys inhabit is very dangerous; the threat of death and destruction is everywhere. Boys' time in Neverland consists largely of fighting that threat or fleeing from it. The Neverland of girls is dangerous, too, but not quite so crowded with hobgoblins and ax murderers, and not as focused on exuberant physical play. The sorts of dilemmas girls face are often less extreme, with a focus on workaday domestic crises.

But it is important to stress that girl play only *seems* untroubled when compared to the mayhem of boy play. Risk and darkness seep into the doll corner as well. For example, Paley recounts how, at first glance, it may seem that the girls are sweetly playing mother and baby. But look closer. First, the baby almost gets fed poison apple juice. Then a bad guy tries to steal the baby. Then the baby "gets his bones broken off" and is almost set on fire.



The role of sex hormones in gender generally, and play behavior specifically, is illuminated by a disorder called congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH), which results in females being exposed to abnormally high levels of male sex hormones in utero. Girls with CAH are quite normal in most respects, but “affected girls show more boy-typical play, prefer playing with boys more, and are less interested in marriage, motherhood, doll play and infant care.” Girls with CAH enjoy rough-and-tumble as much as boys do, and they prefer “boy” toys such as trucks and guns over “girl” toys such as dolls and dress-up clothes.

Similarly, Paley recounts an incident where two girls playing Rainbow Brite and her flying pony, Starlite (magical characters from a 1980s animated television series), are having dinner together. Everything is going fine until a bad guy named Lurky

appears. The cute little characters, played by two cute little girls, have no choice but to kill Lurky with explosives.

Unlike some of the other subjects of this book—fiction or dreams—almost no one thinks that children’s pretend play is some sort of random accident of human evolution. The pioneering child psychologist Jean Piaget, who thought that the fantasy life of children was “a muddle out of which more adequate and orderly ways of thinking will emerge,” is now definitely in the minority. These days, experts in child psychology agree that pretend play is *for* something. It has biological functions. Play is widespread in animals, and all but universal in mammals, especially the smart ones. The most common view of play across species is that it helps youngsters rehearse for adult life. From this perspective, children at play are training their bodies and brains for the challenges of adulthood—they are building social and emotional intelligence. Play is important. Play is the work of children.

Sex differences in children’s play reflect the fact that biological evolution is slow, while cultural evolution is fast. Evolution hasn’t caught up with the rapid changes in men’s and women’s lives that have occurred mainly in the past one hundred years. Children’s play still seems to be preparing girls for lives beside the hearth and preparing boys for lives of action in the world. This is the basic division of labor—men doing the hunting and fighting and women doing most of the foraging and parenting—that has characterized human life over tens of thousands of years. Anthropologists have never found a culture where, say, women do the lion’s share of fighting or men do most of the child care.

Writing this, I feel a little like the narrator in Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Black Cat.” Before tying a noose and hanging the titular feline from a tree, the narrator first digs out the cat’s eye with a jackknife. Confessing his crime, he writes, “I blush, I burn, I

shudder, while I pen the damnable atrocity!” The idea that gender has deep biological roots is something almost everyone accepts these days but still avoids saying in polite company. It sounds too much like a limit on human potential, especially on the potential of women to move into positions of cultural equality. But the spectacular changes in women’s lives over the past half century—driven largely by the way that cheap and reliable contraception has given women control of their fertility—should allay our fears.

When my daughter Annabel announces her plan to become a princess when she grows up, I squirm. I say, “You know you can be other things, like a doctor.” And Annabel replies, “I’ll be a princess *and* a doctor. And a mommy.” And I smile and say, “Okay.”

Source C

A is for Afro, B is for Beautiful, C is for Cool:
The Black ABC from the 1970s

"A picture says more than a thousand words." The phrase was introduced by Frederick R. Barnard in 1921 publishing "One look is worth a thousand words", a piece on the effectiveness of graphics in advertising. Barnard pointed out that the phrase was originally coined by a Japanese philosopher adding "and he was right."

The following flash cards were published in 1970 by the Society for Visual Education in Chicago, founded by professor of astronomy Forest Ray Moulton and utilities magnate Harley L. Clarke in 1919 (Saettler, 2004). Here is a quote from the back of the original flash cards:

"The pictures are of people and situations particularly relevant to many city children and thus make the reading readiness program in city schools more meaningful."

Moazedi, M. Laura. *A Is for Afro, B Is for Beautiful, C Is for Cool: The Black ABC from the 1970s.*
moazedi.blogspot.com/2016/05/a-is-for-afro-b-is-for-beautiful-c-is.html.



Bb



B is for **b**eautiful.

Source D

“The Evolutionary Theory of Art” (excerpt) by Brian Boyd

Evolutionary Theories of Art

Brian Boyd

The Enigma of Art

Although discussing religion, Daniel Dennett could easily have had art in mind when he wrote: “Any phenomenon that apparently exceeds the functional cries out for an explanation. We don’t marvel at a creature doggedly grubbing in the earth with its nose, for we figure it is seeking its food; if, however, it regularly interrupts its rooting with somersaults, we want to know why. What benefits are presumed (rightly or wrongly) to accrue to this excess activity?”¹ Nor do we marvel too much at the bone spear-throwers that helped Paleolithic hunters fell prey at greater distances, but when we see that the handle of a spear-thrower has been exquisitely carved to represent a leaping horse or an ibex turning to watch herself give birth, we want to know why.² How can a species as successful as *Homo sapiens* have evolved to devote so much time and energy to “somersaults” like sculpture, song, and story, rather than stalking steadily after food or mates?

In trying to explain fiction, John Tooby and Leda Cosmides note that the “appetite for the true” that we could expect in any natural data-gathering system like the human mind “fails to predict a large part of the human appetite for information”: most people prefer novels to textbooks, fiction film to documentary.³ In explaining art in general, and our intense pleasure in engaging with art, we need to explain why an “appetite for the useful” fails to predict so much of human activity, from a tribeswoman weaving designs on a basket to a townswoman watching a TV soap opera.

Unless we revert to myths of divine creation, evolution must be part of any complete account of the human, including human art. Many needlessly fear that evolutionary explanations of the human imply “genetic determinism” and the end to hopes of transforming human lives for the better. If evolution can help explain art—human behavior at its freest and most creative—any fears that it implies determinism or denies culture should be dispelled once and for all. No one was ever “genetically determined” to write or read something as unprecedented as *Ulysses*.

Defining Art

But what do we mean by art? What do we include as art? Modern aesthetics argues about what human products count as works of art in response to the challenges to the boundaries and definitions of art posed by modern artists—like Andy Warhol with his Brillo boxes, to cite a much-discussed example. An evolutionary approach tends to see art not primarily in terms of works worth gallery display or literary awards but as a widespread human behavior stretching from ocher body-painting to O'Keeffe.

In this sense, art covers a huge range of activities, from a child making up stories, humming, or drawing in the sand to Tolstoy, Mahler, or Zeng Jing. Let me suggest what they have in common: Art is the attempt to engage attention by *transforming objects and/or actions in order to appeal to species-wide cognitive preferences for the sake of the response this evokes. The more (1) the appeal is purely to these preferences, and the more (2) it operates within some tradition of appealing to (and, hence, elaborating and refining) such preferences, and (3) the more skilled and successful is the attempt to engage attention and evoke a rich response, the more centrally it will be art.*

We engage each other's attention, of course, in casual conversation or in information exchange, but even here there may be elements of artfulness to the degree that we use images, allusions, jokes, mimicked intonations, or ironic deflations as we vivify gossip through selecting, highlighting, animating, reenacting, or stretching the truth toward fiction for the sake of holding an audience. In the metaphors and metonymies and pungent apothegms of Johnson's conversation or the freewheeling amplitude of Coleridge's, or in the dense imagery of Keats's letters or Flaubert's, social exchange shades toward pure art, but not as close as a Keats ode or a Flaubert fiction. For the poem or the fiction has been designed to appeal to still more of our preferences for pattern, situation, character, or story and thereby to catch and hold the attention of any audience, far beyond the naturally shared focus of a moment, a situation, a friendship.

Art, Nature, and Culture

Traditional views of art have tended to see art as reflecting nature, especially human nature, all the way from Plato's discomfort with, or Aristotle's admiration for, mimesis to Shakespeare's or Stendhal's images of art as holding the mirror up to nature. Common-sense traditional views have easily shaded into transcendental views of art, widespread because religious beliefs have been so pervasive and because both artists and their patrons in state or church benefit by nurturing a sense of awe at art's putatively divine origins and power.

The pervasive contemporary critical inclination often known as Theory, but recently labeled more meaningfully Cultural Critique,⁴ rightly critiques traditional common-sense and transcendental views, pointing out that the nature, human nature, or supernature that art was supposed to reflect was often merely what was assumed of these things from within a local cultural perspective. Roland Barthes, for example, criticizes "the mystification which transforms petit-bourgeois culture into universal nature."⁵ But such critics' critiques also mislead, since they jump to the conclusion that human nature is either nonexistent or is to be explained by culture alone, which they assume detaches human nature from biology. If cultural anthropology has shown that human nature is much more diverse than any one society had assumed, evolutionary biology and anthropology have also begun to discover that culture exists in many animal species (dialects and fashions in bird and whale song, for instance, or in chimpanzee traditions of toolmaking), that there is a universal human nature, and that in humans, too, culture is not *apart from* nature but a *part of* nature. And as many have noted, "explaining" human cultural variation by the power of culture is too circular to be an explanation at all.⁶

In the study of art, stress on cultural difference has even led to the denial that those in other cultures, or in Western culture before, say, the eighteenth century, have such a notion as art. But as Stephen Davies observes, the very concept that there is no non-Western art is a Western one; as Denis Dutton argues, neither the ancient Greeks nor Sepik carvers in Papua New Guinea have a single word to match modern Western "art," but both peoples practice and have concepts of art akin to some of the *many* notions of art currently available in the West.⁷ It takes considerable effort to decipher another language, but art can be appreciated and appropriated rapidly across cultures, from Dürer in the 1520s encountering treasures from Mexico and commenting that he had "never seen in all my life anything that has moved my heart so much" or Goethe reading Chinese novels and observing that "These people think and feel much as we do" to Japanese audiences enraptured by Shakespeare and Beethoven.⁸ In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Maori and Sepik carvers picked up Western tools and techniques as keenly as Gauguin or Picasso borrowed from non-Western cultures.

Evolution and Art

Evolutionary theories of art consider art in the light of the first fully scientific attempt to understand human nature. They can ask why art exists at all, how it relates to precursors of art in other species, why it is so prevalent in human behavior. Why *do* we spend so much of our time in sensory somersaults?

There are many evolutionary accounts of art. I will focus on four of the foremost theories of art as possibly a biological adaptation and their most prominent proponents: (1) art is not an adaptation but a *byproduct* of the evolution of human brains by natural selection (Steven Pinker); (2) art is a product not of natural selection but of *sexual selection* (Geoffrey Miller); (3–4) art is an *adaptation*, its chief function *social cohesion* (Ellen Dissanayake) or individual mental *organization* (John Tooby and Leda Cosmides).

In evolutionary theory, an "adaptation" is a biological trait, physiological, psychological or behavioral, shaped by natural selection to enhance the fitness of members of a species.⁹ For a trait to constitute an adaptation there must be clear evidence of a fitness-enhancing *function* and of complex *design* toward achieving it.

Many functions of all sorts have been proposed for art over the years by artists, philosophers, and anthropologists puzzled and impressed by the human drive to produce and consume art.¹⁰ But in evolutionary theory, the notion is distinct and strict: "function" means *design* that increases reproductive or survival advantage.

Those who study the human in the light of evolution do so from a wide range of backgrounds. At one end of the spectrum are those close to artificial intelligence and cognitive psychology, who see minds as designed to solve information-processing problems and, hence, in evolutionary psychology, who see aspects of the human mind as having evolved to solve particular problems our forebears had to face in the Pleistocene era. How can we reverse engineer this or that aspect of the mind, they ask, to discover the function it would have served under ancestral conditions?

But others interested in the evolution of the human who come from backgrounds in biology such as animal psychology or primatology often prefer not a single-minded concentration on function but answers to the four questions that ethologist Niko Tinbergen felt necessary to explain an adaptation: Why? (What *function* does it have; how does it help the species survive or reproduce?); How? (What *mechanism* does it operate by?); Whence? (What is its *origin* in the evolutionary history of the species?); and When? (When does it *develop* in the individual?).¹¹ To be comprehensive on evolutionary grounds, an adaptive explanation of art needs to consider all these criteria.

Evolutionary explanations of art, however, need not claim that art is itself an adaptation. Steven Pinker issues this crisp caveat: "For the same reason it is wrong to write off language, stereo vision, and the emotions as evolutionary accidents—namely their universal, complex, reliably developing, well-engineered, reproduction-promoting design—it is wrong to invent functions for activities that lack design merely because we want to ennoble them with the imprimatur of biological adaptiveness."¹² Art may be explained as a product of the evolved human mind without the further claim that art is itself an adaptation.

Adaptationist or not, a worthwhile evolutionary explanation of art needs not only to account for the biological, psychological, and behavioral evidence but also to add both depth and detail to our engagement with art. It should be able to explain not only how and why art in general exists but also why particular modes, traditions, and works take the form and have the impact that they do.

...

Art as By-Product

Even those who accept that evolution has adapted the human mind in highly specific ways can argue that art is no adaptation but only a by-product of the brain's complexity. Steven Pinker has famously explained "how the mind works," how it has been adapted by evolution rather than left a "blank slate." Once on the verge of choosing an engineering career, he sees evolutionary psychology as "reverse engineering" the mind, taking apart its components to determine their function, but he finds no evidence that the mind has any specific design for art. He therefore rates art as not an adaptation but an evolutionary by-product.²⁴

For Pinker we have not only, like other species, our own special suite of evolved cognitive preferences but also an evolved capacity to design artifacts to ends we desire. Narrative, he concedes, may serve an adaptive function in enabling us to develop scenarios to test possible courses of action and their consequences without risking real-world harm.²⁵ Otherwise, he considers art a by-product, in which we deploy our capacity for design to deliver high-energy treats to our cognitive tastes, to concoct "cheesecake" for the mind, or to develop "a useless technology for pressing our pleasure buttons" by "defeat[ing] the locks that safeguard" them.²⁶

Pinker rightly stresses the role of our cognitive preferences, which did not evolve *for* but are appealed *to* in art. Here, indeed, lies a rich research program for the new sciences of the mind: just what are the preferences that music, visual art, and literature appeal to, how and why have they evolved, and how are they traded off against one another in art?²⁷ In his most in-depth examination of a single art, Pinker summarizes the work of other psychologists and offers additional suggestions about the mental mechanisms behind the pleasures of music.²⁸

When Pinker calls art "a cheesecake for the mind," he implies that just as we have developed technologies to satisfy our evolved taste preference for

sweetness—valuable at a time when high-calorie foods had to be actively sought out—so in art we have developed technologies to satisfy other cognitive preferences for rich aural or visual or social information. His metaphor becomes a motif throughout his major examination of the arts and is meant to provoke. But as he often does, Pinker rhetorically substitutes a particular preference which evolution could never have selected for, for a general one which it could. A Porsche or a linen suit may help to secure a partner, he remarks elsewhere, but is not an adaptation. No, but capacities to display and assess signs of status have evolved in many species, as in humans.²⁹ And if we compare our taste for art in general with our taste not for cheesecake but for sweetness in general, art may seem much less improbable as an adaptation.

Pinker's metaphors—cheesecake, pleasure-buttons, or music as "a cocktail of recreational drugs that we ingest through the ear"³⁰—foreground art as consumption. But before we respond to art, we first have to generate it. In modern society ready-made art is as available as ready-made cheesecake, but for most of human history and in most societies, art results from the efforts of all, as people weave and carve, sing and dance, tell and reenact stories. The compulsion to engage in art needs to explain the compulsion to *make* art as well as to enjoy it. Art has usually involved intense effort, and the cheesecake metaphor fails to explain why in every society that effort has seemed worthwhile.

Art as cheesecake seems an indulgent extra. But if art were so superfluous, how could it not have been selected against? Why would groups without art, and therefore with much more time and energy for practical purposes, not have out-competed, outbred, and ultimately outlasted their more self-indulgent neighbors? The fact that all known societies engage in art³¹ suggests that it has advantages strong enough for a predisposition to art to have become part of the design of the human mind.

The cheesecake metaphor has a specific evolutionary overtone: that art might even be maladaptive, just as our once adaptive appetite for sweet and fat now threatens us with an epidemic of obesity. Paul Hernadi replies to Pinker's implication by suggesting that it explains only "why too many literary calories may clog our mental arteries" *today*, when we can buy novels and videos a few supermarket aisles past the cheesecakes. But turned around the other way, Hernadi notes, the metaphor might suggest that "well-adapted early humans were pursuing scarce mind-sharpening opportunities for protoliterary experience with almost as much gusto as they pursued meals rich in fats and sugars": the arts *were* adaptive.³² In fact, they seem to remain so. Despite the increasing abundance of art, despite complaints about the dumbing down of culture, despite children having ever more music, story, and art available in print, on screen, on disc, no epidemic of intellectual obesity threatens us, and as the Flynn effect notes, IQ levels have risen with each decade since they were first measured.³³

...

Conclusion

Only an evolutionary theory of art can explain why humans are so made that art matters so much to us, and perhaps why art has made such a difference to the success of our species.

Evolutionary analysis of art may or may not, finally, recognize art as an adaptation, but it will almost certainly show that art depends deeply on evolved features of human minds and behavior, and can link those investigating the arts to the rich research programs into human nature and human behavior currently under way in modern biology and psychology.

Evolutionary theories of art should be assessed on their capacity to generate testable predictions and withstand criticism and competition, to account for the evidence, and to explain art itself: its nature and purposes and impact, its kinds and range and content, its capacity to harness both tradition and innovation, the details of its particular canons and works, its interpretation and evaluation, and its relations to other human impulses, activities, and achievements and to other animal behaviors.

There are other evolutionary theories of art than those discussed here,⁹² and other ways of relating evolution to art and literature than through an overarching theory of art as an adaptation. Much of the most promising work on literature and evolution, for instance, investigates one aspect of human nature as suggested by evolution (such as mate choice, male violence, or theory of mind) and examines literary works in this light or uses cross-cultural studies of stories to test evolutionary hypotheses about features of human behavior.⁹³

But among evolutionary theories of art as a whole, those discussed here are the most influential to date and represent most major positions: adaptation or by-product, natural or sexual selection, or individual or social functions. All may have a role to play in a comprehensive evolutionary theory of art: Pinker's sharp sense of the mind's detailed design and of the value to the mind of the information we attend to and the ways we attend to it, and his stress on art's ingenious appeals to the adapted mind; Miller's arguments for the part sexual selection may have played in intensifying the artistic impulse and explaining the difference between male and female rates of producing public art; Tooby and Cosmides's alertness to art's role in developing the imaginative scope of decoupled human thought and extending the space in which we think, imagine, and feel; and most promising of all, Dissanayake's stress on human shared attention, which we can extend to suggest not only art's phylogenetic and ontogenetic origins but also its multiple functions, from catching and keeping up with attention through to social cohesion and individual and social creativity. And unlike other explanations, a theory of art focused on the sharing of attention can explain art as a whole, from its overall impact down to its fine-grained detail, even to the decisions individual artists make, in this line or that phrase, to maximize the attention, engagement, and response of an audience.

Joseph Carroll argues not only that literature represents the world but also that until recently it was the great repository of information about human nature.⁹⁴ That is not quite true: the great repository of information about human nature was the human mind, adapted intricately by evolution to understand other

human minds. Nevertheless, literature was the great *public* repository of insight into human nature. "Trust Shakespeare," Antonio Damasio says, citing lines by the fallen Richard II, "to have been there before," to have made the distinction between emotion and feeling that Damasio himself, as a neuroscientist of the emotions, now wishes to propose.⁹⁵

But if we were to value literature as the repository of shared knowledge of human nature, would this not raise the question: what role would remain for literature in a world where science can now offer considerably more objective explanations even of subjective human nature? Damasio points out that Shakespeare expresses gloriously the standard assumption that psychic feeling precedes somatic emotion, but he then adduces evidence to show that in fact emotion evolves before feeling in the course of evolution and of individual experience and that after neurological damage it is possible to lose feeling and not emotion, but not the other way around.

Science can explain human nature, but art's role is not to explain but to engage and to evoke. Scientists are approaching an evolutionary explanation of why laughter developed in humans and a neurophysiological explanation of how it operates, but they will not make us laugh by doing so or find a formula for being funny or make us laugh less in future because we now understand better why or how we laugh.⁹⁶ Similarly we have been shaped to savor art and stories more immediately, more viscerally, more emotionally than we can respond to new scientific explanations. Science can explain why and how art has come to matter, but that will not give science the emotional impact of art, nor allow it to find a formula for art, nor make art matter less. If anything, it will only clarify why and how art matters so much.

Source E
“!Kung San Storyteller”



!Kung San storyteller, South Africa, 1947
Photo by Nat R. Farbman .jpg

Source F
The Alfred Hitchcock and The Kuleshev Effect



Alfred Hitchcock explains the grammar of editing.

Watch the short video [here](#).

The Kuleshov Effect

It is how a subject is depicted which shapes how we think about it. In the absence of meaning, the audience becomes the participant in this experiment in editing and montage.

The Kuleshov effect takes its name from Lev Kuleshov, an influential filmmaker in the mid-twentieth century Soviet Union. A Kuleshov shot is a single long close-up of an actor named Mozhukhin, sitting still without expression. Kuleshov then intercut it with various shots... a bowl of soup, a child in a coffin, and a woman. The audience "marveled at the sensitivity of the actor's range."

The essence of the Kuleshov effect is filling in the blanks, or connecting the dots. Mozhukhin isn't actually looking at anything; he probably doesn't even know what they'll make him look at, so he can't possibly be reacting to it. He expresses no emotion, so an audience cannot possibly see emotion on his face, but the audience does. The viewer is presented with a situation or environment along with the academic fact that someone is experiencing it. He cannot simply accept the actor's evident emotion, as none is given, so he decides what the appropriate response would be and then assigns it to the actor... The viewer doesn't realize the reaction is in his own mind. He assumes the actor shows it, but he can't see just how, so it seems like an almost magical projection of feeling by a brilliant actor... The character seems stoic, which at once impresses the viewer and lends weight to the emotion he does seem to display. (adapted from J. Duvall, *moviegeeksunited.net*. 2009)

The Assignment

Using YouTube or any other media sharing platform, submit a montage demonstrating the Kuleshov effect: a single clip of *you* intercut between a variety of images. The images you use may be still photos or video footage, and the footage of yourself must be copied and used several times: it must be the same footage of yourself, repeated. The finished film must evoke three different emotional responses in your audience. The film must be 32 seconds in length, including a four second credit at the end with your name and period number: each clip, including still photos if you use them, must be four seconds in length.

Submit the *link* to your video via Schoology; contact me immediately with technical problems or concerns.

Source G

Ezra Pound: “In a Station of the Metro”

“In a Station of the Metro” by Ezra Pound

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

Source H

The Social Conquest of Earth: "Language" by E.O. Wilson

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

THE SOCIAL CONQUEST OF EARTH



EDWARD
O. WILSON

WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE

"A sweeping argument about the biological origins of complex human culture. . . .
Well-crafted and captivating." —Michael Gazzaniga, *Wall Street Journal*

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The Origin of Language

THE EXPLOSION OF INNOVATIONS that lifted humanity to world dominance surely did not result from a single empowering mutation. Even less likely did it come as some mystic afflatus that descended upon our struggling forebears. Nor could it have been due to the stimulus of new lands and rich resources—enjoyed also by the relatively unprogressive species of horses, lions, and apes. Most probably it was the gradual approach to and final attainment of a tipping point, the crossing over of a threshold level of cognitive ability that endowed *Homo sapiens* with a dramatically high capacity for culture.

The climb had begun in Africa at least two million years earlier, with the habiline precursors of *Homo erectus*. At that point the forebrain began its phenomenal growth, not seen in any other complex structure during half a billion previous years of animal evolution. What ignited this change? The preadaptations for eusociality, the most advanced level of social organization, had all been laid in place, but such was also true for the multiple species of australopithecines that existed up to that time, none of whom hit upon the path to rapid cerebral growth. The clue to the advance to *Homo*, I believe, lies in the critical preadaptation that had carried the few other evolving animal species in the history of life that have managed to cross the eusociality threshold. Every one, without exception, from the two dozen or so insect and crustacean lines to the naked mole rats, defended a nest from which members could forage for enough food to sustain the colony. In the rare instances where such colonies could outcompete solitary individuals, they remained at

the nest instead of dispersing to renew the cycle of solitary life.

It is no coincidence that by the origin of *Homo erectus*, and very likely earlier, at the time of its immediate ancestor *Homo habilis*, small groups had begun to establish campsites. They were able to create these equivalents of animal nests because they had shifted their diet from vegetarian to omnivore, with a substantial reliance on meat. They scavenged and hunted, and in time they came to rely on the high caloric yield of cooked animal flesh. The archaeological evidence indicates that no longer did their bands wander constantly through a territory gathering fruit and other vegetable food, in the manner of contemporary chimpanzees and gorillas. Now they selected defensible sites and fortified them, with some staying for extended periods to protect the young while others hunted. When controlled fire at the camp was added, the advantage of this way of life was solidified.

Still, meat and campfire are not enough by themselves to explain the rapid increase in size of the brain that occurred. For the missing piece we can turn, I believe with some confidence, to the cultural intelligence hypothesis of Michael Tomasello and his co-workers in biological anthropology, developed during the past three decades.

These researchers point out that the primary and crucial difference between human cognition and that of other animal species, including our closest genetic relatives, the chimpanzees, is the ability to collaborate for the purpose of achieving shared goals and intentions. The human specialty is intentionality, fashioned from an extremely large working memory. We have become the experts at mind reading, and the world champions at inventing culture. We not only interact intensely with one another, as do other animals with advanced social organizations, but to a unique degree we have added the urge to collaborate. We express our intentions as appropriate to the moment and read those of others brilliantly, cooperating closely and competently to build tools and shelters, to train the young, to plan foraging expeditions, to play on teams, to accomplish almost all we need to do to survive as human beings. Hunter-gatherers and Wall

Street executives alike gossip at every social gathering, evaluating others, estimating their truthfulness, and predicting their intentions. Our leaders spin political strategy with the crafts of social intelligence. Businessmen strike deals from intention reading, and the bulk of the creative arts is devoted to its expression. As individuals we can live scarcely a day without the exercise of cultural intelligence, even if only in the frequent rehearsals that invade our private thoughts.

Human beings are enmeshed in social networks. Like the proverbial fish in the sea, we find it difficult to conceive of any place different from this mental environment we have evolved. From infancy we are predisposed to read the intention of others, and quick to cooperate if there is even a trace of shared interest. In one revealing experiment, children were shown how to open the door to a container. When adults tried to open the door but pretended not to know how, the children stopped what they were doing and crossed the room to help. Chimpanzees put in the same circumstance, but far less advanced in cooperative awareness, made no such effort.

In another experiment, the chimpanzees were given tests of intelligence, and their scores compared with those of 2.5-year-old children tested before schooling and literacy. In solving physical and spatial problems (for example, locating a hidden reward, discriminating different quantities, understanding the properties of tools, using a stick to reach an object out of reach), the chimpanzees and young children were about equal. On the other hand, the children displayed more advanced skills than the chimpanzees in a variety of social tests. They learned more while watching a demonstration, better understood cues that aid in locating a reward, followed the gaze of others to a target, and grasped the intention of the actions of others in searching for a reward. Humans, it appears, are successful not because of an elevated general intelligence that addresses all challenges but because they are born to be specialists in social skills. By cooperating through the communication and the reading of intention, groups accomplish far more than the effort of any one solitary person.

The early populations of *Homo sapiens*, or their immediate ances-

tors in Africa, approached the highest level of social intelligence when they acquired a combination of three particular attributes. They developed shared attention—in other words, the tendency to pay attention to the same object at ongoing events as others. They acquired a high level of the awareness they needed to act together in achieving a common goal (or thwarting others in the attempt). And they acquired a “theory of mind,” the recognition that their own mental states would be shared by others.

When these qualities had been sufficiently developed, languages comparable to those that prevail today were invented. This advance certainly occurred before the African breakout 60,000 years ago. By that time, the colonists had the full linguistic capability of their modern descendants and probably used sophisticated languages. The chief evidence for this conclusion is that present-day aboriginal populations, direct descendants of the colonists now existing in settled relict populations from Africa to Australia, all possess languages of such high quality and the mental attributes necessary to invent them.

Language was the grail of human social evolution, achieved. Once installed, it bestowed almost magical powers on the human species. Language uses arbitrarily symbols and words to convey meaning and generate a potentially infinite number of messages. It is capable ultimately of expressing to at least a crude degree everything the human senses can perceive, every dream and experience the human mind can imagine, and every mathematical statement our analyses can construct. It seems logical that language did not create the mind, but the opposite. The sequence in cognitive evaluation was from intense social interaction in early settlements to a synergism with increasing ability to read and act upon intention, to a capacity to create abstraction in dealing with others and the outside world and, finally, to language. The rudiments of human language might have appeared as the essential enabling mental qualities that came together and coevolved in a synergistic fashion. But it is highly unlikely that it preceded them. Michael Tomasello and his coauthors have stated the case as follows:

Language is not basic; it is derived. It rests on the same underlying cognitive and social skills that lead infants to point to things and show things to other people declaratively and informatively, in a way that other primates do not do, and that lead them to engage in collaborative and joint attentional activities with others of a kind that are also unique among primates. The general question is, What is language if not a set of coordination devices for directing the attention of others? What could it mean to say that language is responsible for understanding and sharing intentions, when in fact the idea of linguistic communication without these underlying skills is incoherent. And so, while it is true that language represents a major difference between humans and other primates, we believe that it actually derives from the uniquely human abilities to read and share intentions with other people—which also underwrite other uniquely human skills that emerge along with language such as declarative gestures, collaboration, pretense, and imitative learning.

Animals are occasionally described as having a language. Honeybees, perhaps the most striking example, are said to communicate with abstract signals during their dances on the combs of the hive, as well as on the massed bodies of their fellow workers during emigration to new nest sites. The dancing bee does indeed convey the direction and distance of the target, whether a source of nectar and pollen or a potential new nest site. But the code is fixed, and has been for probably millions of years. Also, the dance is not an abstract symbol as composed in human words and sentences. It is a reenactment of the flight the outbound bees must take to get to the target. If the dancer moves in a circle, it means the target is close to the nest (“travel closely around the nest to find the target”). The waggle dance, tracing a figure eight repeated over and over, tells of a more distant target. The middle segment of the 8, more like the Greek letter Θ , is the direction to take with reference to the angle of the sun, and the length of the middle segment is proportional to the distance to the target. This is impressive, but only humans can say something like, “Go out the entrance, turn right, keep on the road

occurred between B. F. Skinner and Noam Chomsky on this subject. It took the form of a long essay review by Chomsky of Skinner's book *Verbal Behavior*, published in 1957. Skinner, the founder of behaviorism, said language is all learned. Chomsky disagreed. Learning a language, he said, with all its grammatical rules added, is too complex for a child to memorize during the time available. Chomsky at first appeared to win the argument. He subsequently reinforced his point by bringing forth a series of rules that, he proposed, are followed spontaneously in the developing brain. These rules were, however, expressed in an almost incomprehensible manner, an unfortunate example of which follows:

To summarize, we have been led to the following conclusions, on the assumption that the trace of a zero-level category must be properly governed.

1. VP is α -marked by I.
2. Only lexical categories are L-markers, so that VP is not L-marked by I.
3. α -government is restricted to sisterhood without the qualification (35).
4. Only the terminus of an X^0 -chain can α -mark or Case-mark.
5. Head-to-head movement forms an A-chain.
6. SPEC-head agreement and chains involve the same indexing.
7. Chain coindexing holds of the links of an extended chain.
8. There is no accidental coindexing of I.
9. I-V coindexing is a form of head-head agreement; if it is restricted to aspectual verbs, then base-generated structures of the form (174) count as adjunction structures.
10. Possibly, a verb does not properly govern its α -marked complement.

Scholars struggled to understand what appeared to be a profound new insight into the workings of the brain. “Deep grammar” or “universal grammar,” as it was variously called, was a favorite topic of be fuddled *salonistes* and college seminars. For a long time, Chomsky succeeded because, if for no other reason, he seldom suffered the indignity of being understood.

Eventually, analysts were able to put into comprehensible language and diagrams which Chomsky and his followers were saying. Among the most accessible and sympathetic was Steve Pinker's best-selling *The Language Instinct* (1994).

Yet, even with Chomsky decoded, the question remained: Is there really a universal grammar? An overwhelmingly powerful instinct to learn language certainly exists. There is also a sensitive period in a child's cognitive development when the learning is quickest. In fact, so swift is language acquisition, so fierce the child's effort to learn, that Skinner's argument may not be so dismissible after all. Perhaps there is a time in early childhood, and the ability to learn words and word order so efficient, that a special brain module for grammar is not a necessity.

In fact, as experimental and field research has progressed in recent years, a view of the evolution of language different from “deep grammar” has emerged. The alternative allows for epigenetic rules, entailing “prepared learning,” in the way languages of individual cultures evolve. But the constraints imposed by these rules are very broad. The psychologist and philosopher Daniel Nettle has described the emergence of the possibilities it offers for new directions and research on linguistics:

All human languages perform the same function, and the set of distinctions they use to do so is probably highly constrained. The constraints come from the universal architecture of the human mind, which influences language form through the way it hears, articulates, remembers, and learns. However, within these constraints, there is latitude for variation from language to language. For example, the major categories of subject, verb, and object vary in their typical order, and some languages signal grammatical distinctions primarily by syntax, or the combinatorics of words, whereas others achieve this mainly through morphology, or the internal mutation of words.

There now exist a number of likely new avenues for penetrating more deeply into the language enigma, pulling linguistics away from the contemplation of sterile diagrams and more in the direction of biology. One is the manner in which the external environment opens or narrows the constraints in language evolution, whether by genetic evolution or cultural evolution, or both. In warm climates, to take a simple example, languages around the world have evolved to use more vowels and fewer consonants, creating more sonorous combinations of sounds. The explanation for the trend may be a simple matter of acoustic efficiency. Sonorous sounds carry further, in accord with the tendency of people in warm climates to spend more time outdoors and keep greater distances apart.

Another factor in the generation of language diversity may be genetic. There is a correlation in geographical patterns between the use of voice pitch to convey grammar and word meaning on one side and the frequency of the genes technically labeled *ASPM* and *Microcephalin*, which affect the development of voice pitch.

The key properties of the mind guiding language evolution almost certainly appeared before the origin of language itself. Their wellsprings are thought to be in the earlier, more fundamental architecture of cognition. The flexibility in development of syntax has been documented in the variability of word orders in recently evolved creoles, pidgin, and sign languages, which are abundantly used on every continent. Granted that syntax may be skewed by early contact

with conventional languages, such biasing influences can be discounted in at least one case, the sign language of the Al-Sayyid Bedouin. All of the members of this group live in the Negev region of Israel, and all are congenitally deaf. The group was founded two centuries ago by 150 individuals, and its members are descendants of two of the founder's five sons. All suffered profound prelingual hearing loss at all frequencies caused by a recessive gene on chromosome 13q12. As a result of inbreeding from that time forward, all of the 3,500 contemporary Al-Sayyid now share the condition. The community uses a sign language developed early in its history, employing independently derived word orders. These structures differ from those found both in the spoken languages in and around them and in other sign languages used in nearby communities.

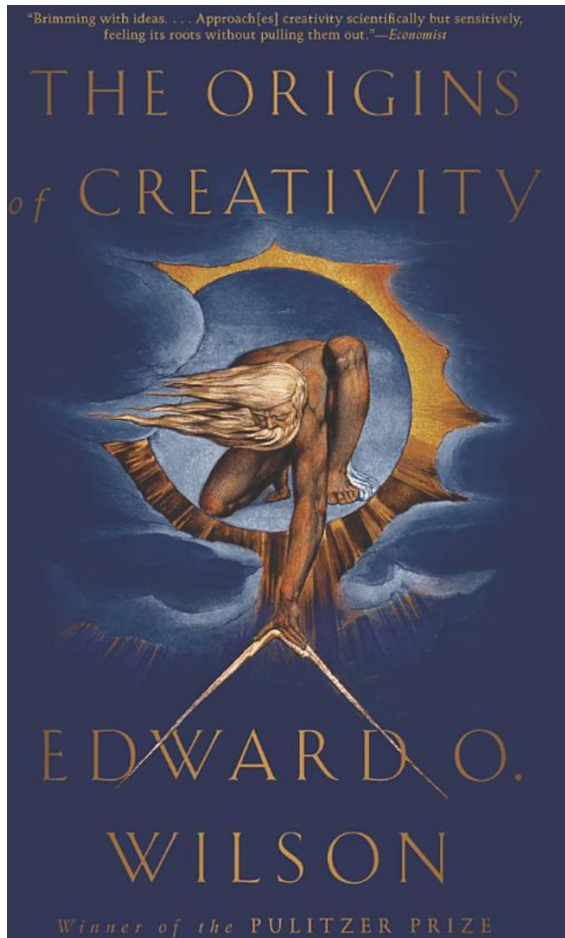
The natural variability of grammar has been further illustrated by research in which the sequence of activities by people engaged in tasks were compared with the word order they used to describe the sequence. In one study, speakers of four languages (English, Turkish, Spanish, and Chinese) were asked to speak and also, separately, to reconstruct the event with the use of pictures. The same order of nonverbal communication (actor-patient-act, which is analogous to subject-object-verb of speech) turned out to be used by all the subjects. That, more or less, is the way people actually think through an action scenario. But it was less than fully consistent across the languages they used in speech. Actor-patient-act was the same as found in many languages of the world—and, most significantly, the newly developing gestural languages. So there does appear to be a biasing epigenetic rule for word order embedded in our deeper cognitive structure, but its final products in grammar are highly flexible and learned. So both Skinner and Chomsky appear to have been partly right, but Skinner more so.

The multiplicity of pathways in the evolution of elementary syntax suggests that few if any genetic rules guide the learning of language by individual human beings. The probable reason has been revealed in

recent mathematical models of gene-culture evolution constructed by Nick Chater and his fellow cognitive scientists. It is simply that the rapidly changing environment of speech does not provide a stable environment for natural selection. Language varies too swiftly across generations and from one culture to the next for such evolution to occur. As a consequence, there is little reason to expect that the arbitrary properties of language, including the abstract syntactic principles of phrase structures and gene marking, have been built into a special “language module” of the brain by evolution. “The genetic basis of human language acquisition,” the researchers conclude, “did not coevolve with language, but primarily predates the emergence of language. As suggested by Darwin, the fit between language and its underlying mechanisms arose because language has evolved to fit the human brain, rather than the reverse.”

It is not going too far, I believe, to add that the failure of natural selection to create an independent universal grammar has played a major role in the diversification of culture and, from that flexibility and potential inventiveness, the flowering of human genius.

The Origins of Creativity: “Metaphors” by E.O. Wilson



Frontispiece: The Reality Unseen where science and the humanities meet. (Calley O'Neill and Rama the Elephant. Painting from The Rama Exhibition, A Journey of Art and Soul for the Earth. [www .TheRamaExhibition.org](http://www.TheRamaExhibition.org). Used by permission.)

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METAPHORS

*But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad, walks o'er the dew
Of yon high eastward hill.*

Horatio speaks thus to Marcellus in *Hamlet*, where a simple exclamation "Look! Dawn has broken" would have sufficed. But poetry we love and great poetry we cherish. Poetry, and much of prose as well, is constructed with metaphor, defined by the literary critic I. A. Richards as "a shift, a carrying over of a word from its normal use to a new use."

The invention of language in the first place, defined as the expression of thought through sounds given arbitrary meaning, was the supreme achievement of human evolution, genetic in its origin, cultural in its elaboration. Without the invention of language we would have remained animals. Without metaphors we would still be savages.

Metaphors are the device by which new words, combinations of new words, and new meanings of words

are invented. An added poetic content invests language with emotion. Language impelled by emotion creates motivation, which drives civilization. The more advanced the civilization, the more elaborate its metaphors. Even the glossaries of physics and engineering are built with them.

A well-wrought phrase that implies the essential identity of the two things compared is a metaphor. Consider Yeats speaking of sisters who lived in the great English house Lisadell, in which

*Pictures of the mind, recall
That gabble and the talk of youth,
Two girls in silk kimonos, both
Beautiful, one a gazelle.*

In the metaphor, the critic Denis Donoghue observes, “The girl’s nature goes over into the nature of the gazelle as if both came from one luminous source. That is what naming comes to: it is not a matter of glancing at an attribute here or there but of acknowledging a complete nature and giving it its destined name.”

Metaphors are essential for humor as well. My two favorite examples are, first, for the reckless and domineering extrovert, “A bull in search of a china shop,” and second, for the narcissist, “A legend in his own mind.”

Metaphors set the imagination free to search for vivifying images. They allow us to cross boundaries, deliver little shocks of aesthetic surprise and humor, and thereby achieve nuance and novel perspective. They permit an infinite expansion of language, and ideas identified by them. The growth has been exponential, with a doubling time of roughly three centuries. The number of words in Chaucer's time was close to 73,000, in Shakespeare's time 208,000, and in present-day use, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 469,000. If technological and commercial jargon is included, the future number could easily double yet again and in a shorter space of time.

Words may be arbitrary in origin, but metaphors are not. Rather, they tend to fall into categories of innate human emotional response. Put differently, they are constrained to some degree by instinct. Among animal-based metaphors, for example, "vulpine" (fox) means clever, secretive, selfish; "porcine" (pig) connotes fat, gluttonous, untidy; "leonine" (lion) signifies the possession of strength, courage, majesty; serpentine (snake) means invidious, seductive, evil, and, in some societies, powerful and beneficent. Across cultures, humans consistently use features of physical nature for metaphors. The sun, for example, represents enlightenment and wisdom; ice and snow, stillness, retreat, or death. The sea stands often for vastness, mother, birth, or mystery.

Metaphors are not intended to express the true nature of the entities that inspired them. Their meaning comes from the way a few of their traits affect our idiosyncratic human senses and emotion. In this perception, they are part instinctual and part learned, part genetic and part cultural. Predictable metaphors are woven together to create the archetypes of the creative arts. They are easily detected as stereotypical plots and characters in stories. They may be imprecise and even trite, but they are the bread and butter of literature and drama.

Source I
“The Language Police”

The greatest dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well-meaning but without understanding.

—Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis

Do you know that Newspeak is the only language in the world whose vocabulary gets smaller every year?

—George Orwell, *1984*

There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with lit matches.

—Ray Bradbury, in the Coda to *Fahrenheit 451*

As a folksinger [Bob Dylan] once sang, “How many roads must an individual walk down before you can call them an adult?”

—from a 2003 college human development textbook

Education historian Diane Ravitch’s book *The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students Learn* (2003, 2004) is scary testimony to the ability of well-meaning Experts to police society through the use of language, limiting freedom of thought on a grand scale. As you read through the results of her research, think about what this means for individual lives and for American society.

Ravitch discovered the language police while serving on a presidential commission charged with promoting national curriculum standards.



First of all, who are *They*?

Ravitch explains that four different agencies produce bias guidelines that shape American education. In thinking about them, keep in mind Foucault’s point about the Experts who, in a knowledge/power relation, construct what we take to be truth and reality. Here are *the language police*, who bow to the dictates of pressure groups and their lawyers, and this is what they do:

Educational publishers issue them as directions for their editors, authors, and illustrators, as well as for the bias and sensitivity panels that review materials before publication.

Test development companies (most of which belong to educational publishers) give them to people who write test questions (items) or select reading passages for tests, as well as to the bias and sensitivity committees that analyze every test item before it appears on a test.

States adopt rules and laws that serve as bias guidelines, describing, sometimes in exacting detail, what must be included or excluded in educational materials. The states that do this exert a powerful effect on publishers and testing companies.

Scholarly and professional associations, like the American Psychological Association, publish bias guidelines that authors for their journals must follow if they want their work to be accepted. (33)

Now, let's turn to some examples. Here are Ravitch's comments about a few of the reading passages that she was surprised to see *rejected by a "bias review panel"* for the publisher of the federal government's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) standardized reading test for fourth graders:

The Friendly Dolphin

This passage was about dolphins and what wonderful creatures they are. It told the story of a legendary dolphin that guided ships through a dangerous channel. Perhaps in anticipation of a bias review, the story left out the part of the legend in which a passenger on one ship shoots the faithful dolphin, which survives but never guides that particular ship again. Fourth graders would probably enjoy reading about dolphins, particularly ones that befriend humans. No matter; the bias reviewers unanimously rejected the story for having a *regional bias* in favor of those who live by the sea. [T]he concept of regional bias presumes that any story that takes place in a singular location—the sea, the mountains, the desert, a forest, the jungle—is inherently inaccessible to those who don't live in the same location.



Women and Patchwork Quilting

The bias and sensitivity reviewers rejected a passage about patchwork quilting by women on the western frontier in the mid-nineteenth century. The passage explained that mothers in that time taught their daughters to sew, and together they made quilts for the girl's dowry when she married. Quilting was an economic necessity because it saved money, and there were not factory-made quilts available until the end of the nineteenth century. The passage briefly explained how quilts were assembled and described them as works of art. The information in the passage was historically accurate, but the bias and sensitivity panel (as well as the "content expert panel") objected to the passage because it contained *stereotypes of females* as "soft" and "submissive." Actually, the passage did nothing of the sort. It was a description of why quilting was important to women on the frontier and how it was done. Nothing in the passage excluded the possibility that mothers and daughters were riding the range, plowing the fields, and herding cattle during the day. The reviewers objected to the portrayal of women as people who stitch and sew, and who were concerned about preparing for marriage. Historical accuracy was no defense for this representation of women and girls, which they deemed stereotypical.

An African American Hero

This passage... told the heroic story of Mary McLeod Bethune, who opened a school for African American girls in Daytona Beach, Florida, in the early twentieth century. Her school, The Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls, opened with five girls and her own son, Albert, as pupils. Bethune had a dream but not much money. Residents of the neighborhood helped out, and students raised money for their tuition. Bethune proved to be a masterful fund-raiser, gaining the support of several wealthy white philanthropists who wintered in Daytona Beach, as well as the National Association of Colored Women.

The bias reviewers disliked the story. They wanted no reference to Bethune's son, because the story couldn't mention the son without mentioning his father. If it mentioned the father, it would have to acknowledge that Bethune and her husband had separated when she moved to Florida; to avoid mentioning separation or divorce, the reviewers wanted no mention of the son. Next, the reviewers objected to the name of the school because it included the word "Negro." Ditto for the reference to the National Association of Colored Women. These references, the bias reviewers asserted, would be meaningless to the students and objectionable to adults who might see the test. Last, the bias reviewers strongly opposed any mention of Bethune's successful fund-raising among the wealthy white residents of Daytona Beach, which they considered patronizing. The fact that she did receive substantial funds from men like John D. Rockefeller was irrelevant. The bias committee objected to Bethune's need to "turn to" such people.

These objections, on their face, are absurd. To leave her son out of her life story as a way of avoiding the reality that she separated from her husband assumes that today's children would find this shocking; surely they are sufficiently acquainted with women who are single parents to accept this unexceptional fact. Further, the name of Bethune's school is historically accurate. It is difficult to tell a story about her school without using the name she gave it. And why treat as an embarrassment Bethune's remarkable skills as a fund-raiser? Anyone, black or white, who could convince some of the richest men in America to support her endeavors deserves commendation. This is not an admission of weakness, but evidence of skill in the arts of persuasion. In the tightly constricted world of the bias reviewers, Bethune created a successful institution by conducting neighborhood bake sales. It would be admirable if true, but it was not true. Truth and historical accuracy, however, are not important values to the bias reviewers.

On Ravitch's view, it makes no sense that "a group of educated and presumably thoughtful adults could have become so priggish, humorless and censorious," finding "insult in words and ideas that most people would find unexceptional (19)." She shows, however, that the policing arose from good intentions:

The present era of bias and sensitivity reviewing began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when civil rights activists attacked standardized tests, insisting that cultural bias in the tests caused large disparities in performance between black and white children. The language of the tests, the critics said, was more familiar to middle-class white children... Testing companies were shocked by the charges of racism; their experts... began to look for ways to identify and eliminate biased questions... A spokesman for McGraw-Hill [discussed how the] companies developed bias guidelines, trained sensitivity reviewers, and tried out test items with different ethnic groups. If the items were "undesirable for one or more groups," they were deleted. (*LP* 51)

Soon, representatives of the feminist movement, various ethnic groups, and groups concerned about age and sex discrimination were adding their own demands. So Ravitch found, much as Foucault had when researching the histories of madness, the prison system, etc., that a whole new understanding of bias arose out of a mix of contingent historical events and gave rise to a solution with unforeseen negative side effects.

Specifically, bias in a test now seems to be anything that might cause a student to pause and reflect in some way, and thus be distracted from the task of adequately answering the multiple choice question. The fear, as explained in one publisher's bias guidelines, is that, "two individuals of the same ability but from different subgroups (20)," say males and females, might perform differently on a question. According to the experts, the only solution to the problem is removing *every possible source of reflection*. For Ravitch, this amounts to "rules for self-censorship that most Americans... would find deeply disturbing"(20), because they are rules that take away from growing and maturing children the freedom even to contemplate much of reality when doing school lessons.

In her book, Ravitch has a great deal more than this to say about problems with standardized testing, but this is not the biggest concern she raises. Much more worrisome is the textbook problem. She writes:

One might imagine that today's textbooks reflect the best research about how children learn and about how to convey important subject matter. One might suppose that the goal of a good textbook is to teach students needed skills and knowledge. One might think that the purpose of a reading textbook is to teach children to read fluently and with comprehension; that a history textbook is supposed to teach students about the past and its influence on the present; that a science or mathematics text should teach science or mathematics.

Actually, in today's world, all of this takes a backseat to social and political concerns. The books now are expected to teach self-esteem,¹ to present role models, to raise consciousness about various issues, to show society as it ought to be.

¹ Some interesting data related to the issue of self-esteem comes from studies of the "brainstorming" strategy for developing ideas that was introduced by advertising guru Alex Osborn in the 1940s. Brainstorming is based on the belief that the best ideas will be produced when people are free to say anything that comes to mind without fear of criticism, when they are encouraged to take a risk because they know that the rule is that all contributions are equal and will be accepted without judgment. An article in *The New Yorker* ("Groupthink: The Brainstorming Myth," January 30, 2012) points out that the "appeal of the idea is obvious: it's always nice to be saturated in positive feedback... But there is a problem with brainstorming. It doesn't work." In fact, "decades of research have consistently shown that brainstorming groups think of far fewer ideas than the same number of people who work alone and later pool their ideas."

Studies have also shown that ideas that received critical feedback were "more 'feasible' and 'effective'" than those that did not. According to Nemeth: "While the instruction 'Do not criticize' is often cited as the important instruction in brainstorming, this appears to be a counter-productive strategy. Our findings show that debate and criticism do not inhibit ideas but, rather, stimulate them relative to every other condition." "Osborn thought that imagination is inhibited by the merest hint of criticism, but Nemeth's work and a number of other studies have demonstrated that it can thrive on conflict." Applying this to what we know about self-esteem: it seems like individuals who have not merely produced, but instead have produced something of quality—individuals who have made what the noted African American social psychologist Kenneth Clark has called "demonstrable achievement"—will have reason to think highly of themselves. (23-24)

This is a tall order indeed. Usually in a democratic society, one pursues social and political change by becoming a part of the political process, by running for office and voting for candidates, by promoting legislation, or by managing a private enterprise. In the topsy-turvy world of educational publishing, advocates for social change have set their sights [sic] on controlling reality by changing the way in which it is presented in textbooks. (34)

Re-describing something in order to make it better is a useful strategy in our society. But is it a good idea for every reading book, every social studies, math and science book, every *Weekly Reader*—that is to say, almost everything that makes up a child’s seven-hour school day, month in and month out—to force-feed children a picture of a world that is biased against historical accuracy and daily reality, one that cultivates feeling good through “uplifting topics (23)” no matter how unrealistic this may be?

Take mice. Mice, which are pretty common just about everywhere, are not particularly uplifting, and they are banned from curriculum because someone might get *scared*! Banned are the stories of *Stuart Little*, *Ratatouille*, and *Despereaux*, *The Secret of Nimh* and *The Rescuers*, Mighty Mouse and Fievel, because well-meaning adults want to protect the youth of America.



Thus, the problem Ravitch found is the censorship present in *all* school materials because publishers, who prioritize fear of lawsuits and loss of business over loss of freedom, conform to the demands of pressure groups such as “the religious right... feminists and advocates for multiculturalism, the handicapped, and the aged” for “uplift” and “representational fairness” (24).

But, before anyone gets upset, note that none of your teachers are against representational fairness that is founded on the belief that no one person or group is inherently “better” and that difference (usually—but not, say, Nazi ideology) should be respected.

But Ravitch shows that the language police, with all the best intentions, have made a mockery of that fundamental goal of democratic society by submitting to pressure groups. She writes:

Bias guidelines are ubiquitous in the world of kindergarten through twelfth-grade schooling. At one level, this is unsurprising: After all, American society has gone through a long and wrenching period from the 1960s to the present, in which diligent citizens and public officials have tried to eliminate all vestiges of invidious discrimination against people on grounds of their race, ethnicity, gender, [etc.].

However, as I read current guidelines, it was clear that they went far beyond the original purpose of eliminating bias and had devolved instead into an elaborate language code that bans many common words and expressions.

I am not speaking of epithets, scatological terms, ethnic slurs, or name-calling; their unacceptability is so obvious that they are not even mentioned in the guidelines. The guidelines prohibit controversial topics, even when they are well within the bounds of reasonable political and social discourse. They combine left-wing political correctness and right-wing religious fundamentalism, a strange stew of discordant influences.

The guidelines aim to create a new society, one that will be completely inoffensive to all parties; getting there, however, involves a heavy dose of censorship. No one asked the rest of us whether we want to live in a society in which everything objectionable to every contending party has been expunged from our reading materials. (32)

Here I should say something about the political slant that conforming to pressure group agendas produces in textbooks—and note the irony of getting rid of some biases only to replace them with others. In particular, does the new slant get at the “real” truth? Does it foster more critical thinking? A better understanding of the world? Focusing on social studies books, Ravitch shows that they have settled for a story of “cultural equivalence” (141) in which:

All of the world’s civilizations were great and glorious... and now the world is growing more global and interconnected. Some bad things happened in the past, but that was a long time ago and now the cultures of the world face common problems...

The textbooks sugarcoat practices in non-Western cultures that they would condemn if done by Europeans or Americans. Seemingly, only Europeans and Americans were imperialistic. When non-European civilizations conquer new territories, the textbooks abandon their critical voice. They express awe toward the ancient empires of China, India, Africa, and Persia but pay no attention to how they grew. Textbook after textbook tells the story of the “spread” of Islam. Christian Europe invades; Islam spreads.

The texts should have a consistent critical lens, in which gross violations of human rights—like slavery, cannibalism, genocide, human sacrifice, and the oppression of women—are recognized as wrong. To avoid moralism and presentism, the textbooks should encourage discussion of differences in historical and contemporary standards across cultures, while recognizing that our present-day values are based on democratic principles that evolved over time. However, the current textbooks are selectively critical.

They condemn slavery in the Western world but present slavery in Africa and the Middle East as benign, even as a means of social mobility, by which slaves became family members, respected members of the community, and perhaps achieved prosperity and high office. The Aztec ritual of human sacrifice is glossed over as something that their religion required to ensure that the sun would rise the next day, a minor detail in what was otherwise a sophisticated and complex culture that valued education and learning.

The texts exaggerate women’s roles, perhaps thinking that this will improve the self-esteem of female students. In text after text, we learn that women in non-Western societies enjoyed extensive rights and privileges. Women in ancient Egypt are said to have been the equals of their husbands; women in ancient Babylon had legal and economic rights; women in ancient China were very powerful within the household (later on, there was the unpleasant practice of

foot-binding); women in ancient Japan played an important role in the arts; women in ancient Africa were the heads of their household; women in Incan culture were special attendants of the sun god; in certain Native American societies, women controlled the governing council. ...India respected the “creative power of women,” although a wife was sometimes required to throw herself on her husband’s funeral pyre. Students might well wonder if the United States was the only culture in which women had to fight for equal rights.

The texts have difficulty criticizing tyranny unless it occurred before 1945. For example, some of them strive to find positive ways to describe Mao’s murderous dictatorship in China. While admitting that he was responsible for the deaths of millions of people, they nonetheless try to look on the bright side by pointing out the great progress that China made during his reign. Their message seems to be: Mao may have killed millions, but...

Religion presents a special problem for the texts... The textbooks’ treatment of religion is consistently deferential, even reverential; they seldom discuss the role of religious belief as a source of conflict. In their eagerness to show respect to all religions, the texts soft-pedal religious hatreds and the religious roots of many wars in history. In the textbooks’ account, wars come and go, empires conquer one another, but religion hovers above all as a beneficent influence. ...Children who read these books will not understand the passions stirred by religious differences, because such things don’t seem to happen in textbook-land, where all religions coexist harmoniously. (143-45)

These are only a few examples from Ravitch’s critique, but keep in mind that they are not isolated. Students are exposed to this history in elementary school, again in middle school, and yet again in high school. Your experience here has not been this politically correct, but only because you haven’t been left to the mercy of the language police and their bias-committee approved, state-mandated textbooks.

What follows are some examples of the thousands of constraints put on what kids are or aren’t allowed to see in their books and other class materials. They are from the appendix at the back of *The Language Police*.

We cannot depict...

Mothers

Running a vacuum cleaner
Cooking or Doing laundry
Carrying food

Women/girls

Having less power than men on a job
Behaving aggressively in high power jobs
Aging less gracefully than men
Working as teachers, nurses, secretaries
Being more nurturing than men
Shopping and spending money
Showing shock, fear or horror
Lacking leadership qualities
Playing house or with dolls
Being weak, confused, gentle or warm
Being neat
Being poor at math or science
Being shorter or smaller than males
Not wearing bras
Having bare feet
Wearing nail polish

Men/boys

Earning more money than a woman
Being capable leaders
Playing sports
Working with tools
Working as doctors, plumbers, carpenters
Being larger or heavier than women
Being crude, harsh or insensitive
Being intelligent, logical, or confident
Having noticeable bulges below the waist
Having bare feet
Having designer tennis shoes or team jackets

Men/boys (cont'd)

Having hands in pockets
Being strong, brave, or competitive
Being angry

People of color

Being angry
Belonging to any one religion
Being politically liberal
Sharing a common culture or preferences
Sharing a common heritage, including language, dance, music, food

African Americans

Having the same skin color or hair texture
Being graceful (women)
Being great athletes or physically powerful
Wearing loud colors or flashy clothes
Wearing standard middle class clothes
Driving big cars
Being unaware of their African heritage
Living in urban ghettos
Living in urban environments

Native Americans

Having the same skin color
Performing a rain dance
Living on reservations with outdoor water tanks
Having long hair, braids, or headbands
Holding bows and arrows
Doing menial jobs or construction work
Sewing buffalo hides or grinding corn
Being craftspeople
Being brave

Asian Americans

Having the same skin color
Being very intelligent or excellent scholars
Being ambitious or hardworking
Having strong family ties
Being quiet and polite
Working as engineers, waiters, or health workers
Being law-abiding

Latinos

Having the same skin color
Swaggering (males)
Being warm, expressive and emotional
Being violent, hot tempered, or bloodthirsty
Living in urban settings
Wearing bright colors
Wearing black (older women)
Working on second-hand cars

Jews

Working as doctors, lawyers, classical musicians, or shopkeepers
Living in urban tenements or wealthy areas
Wearing suits, glasses, and carrying briefcases
Having dark, kinky hair
Being a Jewish princess

Persons who are older

Being meddlesome, demanding, or unattractive
Living in nursing homes
Using canes, walkers, wheelchairs, or glasses
Being ill, physically weak, or dependent

Persons who are older

Being absent-minded or charming
Being retired

Persons who are older (cont'd)

Being with peers
Having gray hair
Fishing
Baking cookies

Persons with disabilities

Being saintly (e.g., Tiny Tim)
Being evil (e.g., Dr. Strangelove)
Being heroic, inspirational, or courageous
Sharing common problems

Persons who are homosexual

Being artistic
Living in urban areas

Miscellaneous

Old ladies with 20 cats
People with moles, scars or disfigurements
People eating with the left hand
People chewing gum
People pointing
People holding hands or otherwise showing affection
People wearing shorts or tank tops
People showing the soles of their shoes
Dumb athletes
Stupid, beautiful women
Fat social misfits
Skinny intellectuals
Caucasians living in wealthy suburbs

Miscellaneous (cont'd)

Children as healthy bundles of energy
Rainbows
Unhealthy foods
Holiday decorations
Dogs and cats on the furniture

Words

(* changes the meaning or is historically inaccurate or is biased)

Adam and Eve → Eve and Adam
American economy → U.S. economy
Birth defect → people with congenital disabilities
Cabin boy → ship's steward*
Caveman → cave dweller
Cleaning woman → housekeeper*, janitor*, custodian*
Devil
Elderly → older person
Ethnic
Extremist → believer*, follower*, adherent*
Fairy → elf*
Gay → happy, lighthearted
Heiress → heir
God
Grass
Heroine → hero*
Hostess → host*
Huts → small houses*
Jungle → rain forest*, savannah*
Junk bonds
Ladylike → feminine*
Man (verb)
Man-of-war → warship*
Master plan → comprehensive plan
Mastery → proficiency, skill, expertise
Middle East → Southwest Asia
Mother Russia → Russia, vast land of rich harvests
Old
Pagan → nonbeliever*
Penmanship → handwriting, writing
Polo

Satan
Senility → dementia
Senior citizen
Sissy
Snowman → snow person
Soda
Teenager → adolescent
Underprivileged
West, Western → specific place*
Yacht
White/whites

What is your personal reaction to these examples of the language police at work—Exhilaration? Pride? Anger? Frustration? Confusion? Happiness? Sadness? At the heart of the issue are these two questions: Why must any view not conforming to that of the well-meaning language police be banned, and what do we as individuals and a society lose when we uncritically conform? In “The Liberating Role of Conflict in Group Creativity: A Cross Cultural Study,”² psychologist Charlan Nemeth, et al., take up the issue, noting:

[T]here is evidence that groups with a dissenter have been found to make better decisions (Van Dyne & Saavedra, 1996). The U.S. Supreme Court has been found to write more cognitively complex arguments when exposed to a minority opinion (Gruenfeld, 1995). Organizations fare better when dissent is valued and expressed (De Dreu, Harinck, & Van Vianen, 1999; Nemeth, 1997). Furthermore, at a societal level, dissent and the airing of conflicting views have long been recognized as a fundamental strength of democracies (Mill, 1859; Nemeth, 1985).³ (p. 8)

In the world of education, pressure groups and their Experts have been busy championing fairness and equality for all, but at what cost? Paradoxically, the unforeseen side effect of their good intentions seems to be a great loss of freedom and diversity of thought for all.

² Institute of Industrial Relations Working Paper Series, University of California, Berkeley, 2003.

³ De Dreu, C. K. W., Harinck, F., & Van Vianen, A. E. M. (1999). Conflict and performance in groups and organizations. In C.L. Cooper, & I.T. Robertson (Eds.), *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (vol. 11., pp. 367-405). Chichester, UK: Wiley.

Gruenfeld, D. (1995). Status, ideology and integrative complexity on the U.S. Supreme Court: Rethinking the politics of political decision making. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68, 5-20.

Mill, J. S. (1859, 1979). *On liberty*. New York: Penguin

Nemeth, C. (1985). Dissent, group process and creativity. In E. Lawler (Ed.), *Advances in group processes theory and research* (pp. 57-75). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Nemeth, C. (1997). Managing innovation: When less is more. *California Management Review*, 40, 59-74.

Van Dyne, L., & Saavedra, R. (1996). A naturalistic minority influence experiment: Effects on divergent thinking, conflict, and originality in work-groups. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 35, 151-168.

Study Questions for “The Language Police”

1. According to Ravitch, what are the major agencies that make up the “language police”?

In analyzing the reading passages that were rejected on account of alleged bias:

2a. What was the problem with “The Friendly Dolphin”?

2b. What was the problem with “Women and Patchwork Quilting”?

2c. What three issues did the review committee find in “An African American Hero”?

2d. What are Ravitch’s opinions about the decisions of the review committee? Do you agree with her? Why or why not?

3. As a result of the contingent historical developments of the 1960s and ‘70s, what new way of describing bias arose?

4a. According to Ravitch, what is now expected to be taught in textbooks, in addition to academic content like history, mathematics, and science?

4b. Why does Ravitch believe this is a problem?

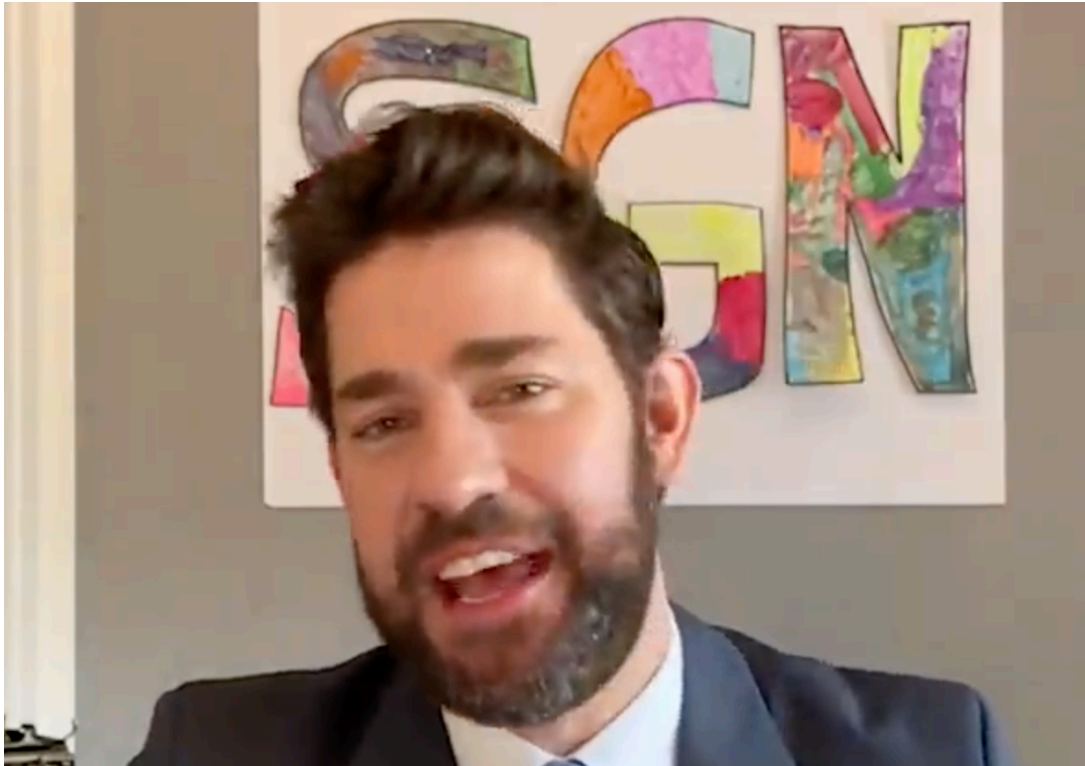
5. Do you agree with Ravitch’s assessment of social studies textbooks, which she sees as a prime example of political correctness impeding critical thinking?

6a. What is your reaction to the list of guidelines on pages 8-9?

6b. Which specific examples do you find unnecessary or perhaps even ridiculous? Explain.

6c. Which examples make sense to you, and you would agree upon? Explain.

Source J
Some Good News (SGN): Episode 4



Click here to see the [video](#).

Source K

“On Being Moved by Art: How Reading Fiction Transforms the Self”

On Being Moved by Art: How Reading Fiction Transforms the Self

Maja Djikic, Keith Oatley, Sara Zoeterman, and Jordan B. Peterson

University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

An experiment tested the hypothesis that art can cause significant changes in the experience of one's own personality traits under laboratory conditions. After completing a set of questionnaires, including the Big-Five Inventory (BFI) and an emotion checklist, the experimental group read the short story *The Lady With the Toy Dog* by Chekhov, while the control group read a comparison text that had the same content as the story, but was documentary in form. The comparison text was controlled for length, readability, complexity, and interest level. Participants then completed again the BFI and emotion checklist, randomly placed within a larger set of questionnaires. The results show the experimental group experienced significantly greater change in self-reported experience of personality traits than the control group, and that emotion change mediated the effect of art on traits. Further consideration should be given to the role of art in the facilitation of processes of personality growth and maturation.

Download the full article [here](#).

Practice: Writing a Précis

Using the “Rhetorical Précis Framework,” complete a précis for Source K.

Source L

“Tell all the truth but tell it slant” by Emily Dickinson

Tell all the truth but tell it slant —
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth’s superb surprise
As Lightning to the Children eased (5)
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind —

Source M
Soul Train: The Hippest Trip in America (Film)

Click here to watch the [film](#).



Few television series were as innovative and influential to pop culture as “Soul Train.” Set first in Chicago, “Soul Train” launched on WCIU-TV with local radio and television personality, Don Cornelius on August 17, 1970. After moving the dance show to Los Angeles, “Soul Train” skyrocketed nationally and firmly secured its place in television by becoming the longest running, first-run syndicated series in history. To commemorate the show’s 40th anniversary, VH1 Rock Docs and Soul Train present “Soul Train: The Hippest Trip In America,” a monumental 90-minute documentary celebrating the show’s impact on pop culture, music, dance and fashion. The film also features a rare interview with Don Cornelius in which he reveals exclusive details regarding the launch and early days of the legendary series.

From 1970—2006, “Soul Train” offered a window into African American music and culture, and its charismatic host, Don Cornelius, was the man responsible for a new era in African American expression. A trained journalist, Don created a media empire that provided an outlet for record labels and advertisers to reach a new generation of music fans. He was and still is one of the first African Americans to own his own show. As the epitome of cool, many of his expressions entered the popular American lexicon: “A groove that will make you move real smooth,” and “Wishing you Love, Peace, and Soul!”

The documentary includes memorable performances and moments from the show, as well as behind-the-scene stories from the people who lived the “Soul Train” movement, including the cast, crew, and dancers. In addition, popular musicians (Chaka Khan, Patti LaBelle, Smokey Robinson, Snoop Dogg, Aretha Franklin), Sly Stone’s first exclusive documentary interview in years, comics (Cedric “The Entertainer,” Nick Cannon), music industry executives (L.A. Reid, Clive Davis, Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff) and actors of yesterday and today will comment on growing up with the show and will share their stories of how “Soul Train” affected their own lives.

Admin, B. (2019, November 24). Soul Train: The Hippest Trip In America. Retrieved June 11, 2020, from <https://www.dayofblackdocs.org/index.php/documentary/featured/previous-film-events/item/27-soul-train-the-hippest-trip-in-america>

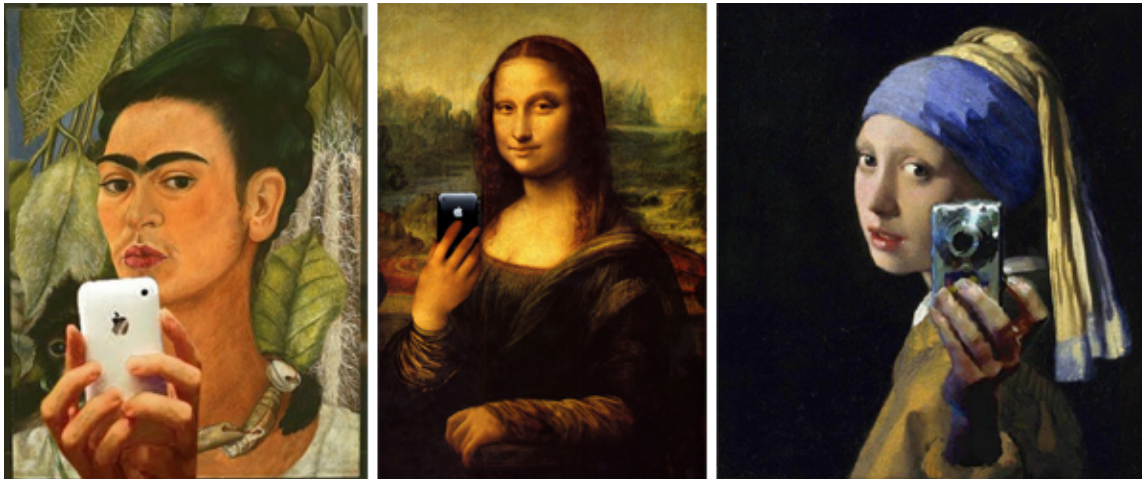
Practice: Writing a Précis

Using the “Rhetorical Précis Framework,” complete a précis for Source M.

Selfies: An (Art) Historical Perspective

We live in an age of addictive self-portraiture, increasingly known as the “age of the selfie.” The selfie is a smartphone-produced version of a self-portrait, which has been a staple of art history. It was in 2010 that the iPhone 4 launched with a front-facing camera and the Golden Age of the Selfie was born. Now “selfie” has been declared by Oxford Dictionaries as their “2013 Word of the Year,” and we’ve seen Barack Obama as well as the Pope participating in the photographic craze. American art critic Jerry Saltz has written of the selfie, “It’s something *like* art. They have a certain intensity, and they’re starting to record that people are the photographers of modern life.” So is the selfie the latest development in the long and fascinating history of self-depiction that attaches to the rich historical context of *art*, or is it a vacuous amusement that spawns from technological innovation married by economics to our shallow narcissism?

The Self-portrait, Then (adapted from *artrepublic.com*)



We find portraiture pioneered by the Egyptians as well as the Greeks and Roman; however, James Hall, author of *The Self-Portrait: A Cultural History*, argues that a coherent starting point for self-portraiture is the middle ages, “because it was an age preoccupied with personal salvation and self-scrutiny.” As the 16th century approached, artists began putting themselves more in the picture, physically, socially, and stylistically. By this time, portraiture had become more naturalistic and concerned with the individual. During the Renaissance the genre benefitted from the heroism of the artist and became truly popular with the increased wealth and interest in individuality. From Albrecht Durer through the 20th century, these artworks are proof that “the pursuit of the elusive self, it seems, never ends.”

Albrecht Durer

German artist Albrecht Durer was arguably the first master of the self-portrait. Although he wasn’t the first artist to produce a self-portrait, he can be arguably claimed to be the first artist that returned to this subject matter throughout his career. In the first half of his life, Durer created a series of exquisite self-portraits. The earliest was drawn in silverpoint in 1484, when he was just 13 years old. In these images Durer constructs his identity as an artist.



Rembrandt van Rijn

Rembrandt van Rijn did the same a century and a half later. He created nearly 100 self-portraits during his lifetime including approximately 50 paintings, 32 etchings, and 7 drawings over a span of forty years. Many of the paintings show him posing in quasi-historical, elaborate dress. Interestingly, the portraits reflect something of Rembrandt's changing fortunes (personal and financial) and confirm his remarkable creative energy even amidst personal crisis.



Vincent van Gogh

Vincent van Gogh painted over 30 self-portraits between 1886 and 1889. His collection places him among the most prolific self-portraits of all time. Like the old masters, van Gogh observed himself critically in a mirror. With fierce expressiveness he created self-portraits with intensity an immediacy that revealed something inner to the outside world in the most vivid possible way. Van Gogh wrote to his sister: "I am looking for a deeper likeness than that obtained by a photographer." And later to his brother: "People say, and I am willing to believe it, that it is hard to know yourself. But it is not easy to paint yourself, either. The portraits painted by Rembrandt are more than a view of nature, they are more like a revelation."



Egon Schiele

One of the leading figures of Austrian Expressionism, Egon Schiele, created self-portraits that were searing explorations of his psyche and sexuality. Schiele's self-portraits helped to re-establish the vitality to the genre with their unprecedented level of emotional and sexual directness. He used figural distortion in place of conventional notions of beauty and even removed the picture's background to annul any distraction that could compete with, what he calls, the "permanent me."



Frida Kahlo

Mexican artist Frida Kahlo is best known for her self-portraits. Following a terrible accident, Kahlo spent many years bedridden with only herself for a model. Self-portraits such as "The Broken Column," which represents her spine as a shattered stone column, were metaphors for Kahlo's pain. Her self-portraits not only dealt with her physical and psychological suffering but also chronicled her turbulent relationship with fellow artist Diego Rivera. Her iconic self-portraits poignantly depict both her isolation and indomitable spirit and sense of self.



Andy Warhol

Throughout Andy Warhol's career, his own self-image was perhaps the most pervasive: both his self-portraits and those photographers snapped. His photo-booth style self portraits of the 1960's gave way to other explorations of the self in the 70's and 80's.



"Like I always wanted Tab Hunter to play me in a story of my life--people would be much happier imagining that I was as handsome as Allen [Midgette] and Tab were. I mean, the real Bonnie and Clyde sure didn't look like Faye [Dunaway] and Warren [Beatty]. Who wants the truth? That's what show business is for – to prove that it's not what you are that counts, it's what they think you are" (Warhol in *Popism*).

Jean-Michel Basquiat

Self-taught artist Jean-Michel Basquiat created brutal self-portraits that were quintessential examples of his ferocious style. Brimming with life and immediacy, they record an almost crippling self-consciousness. Basquiat's self portraits are allegories of his troubled status caught between communities in a web of expectations. "Basquiat's canon revolves around single heroic

figures: athletes prophets, warriors, cops, musicians, kings and the artist himself” (Kellie Jones, *Lost in Translation: Jean-Michel in the (Re)Mix*).



Cindy Sherman

Starting in the late 70’s, American art photographer Cindy Sherman began using herself as her primary subject. Masquerading as a myriad of characters, she invents personas and tableaux that examine the construction of identity. By creating images of herself she explores social role-playing and sexual stereotypes.



The Self-portrait, Now

“In the 20th Century, the act of self-portraiture turns nasty and neurotic, a form of self-abuse,” writes Peter Conrad in his review of *The Self Portrait: A Cultural History*. The heroism of the artist gave way to a self-conscious scrutiny of the artist’s odd individuality. Now self-portraiture, including selfies, has arguably become the defining visual genre of our confessional age. A fast self-portrait, made with a smartphone’s camera and immediately distributed and inscribed into a network, is an instant visual communication of where we are, what we’re doing, who we think we are, and who we think is watching. Selfies have changed aspects of social interaction, body

language, self-awareness, privacy, and humor, altering temporality, irony, and public behavior. It's become a new visual genre—a type of self-portraiture formally distinct from all others in history. Selfies have their own structural autonomy. They are now a force on our cultural landscape, and this is a very big deal. But is this a big deal for *Art*?

Genres arise relatively rarely. Portraiture is a genre. So is still-life, landscape, animal painting, history painting. They overlap, too: a portrait might be in a seascape. A genre possesses its own formal logic, with tropes and structural wisdom, and lasts a long time, until all the problems it was invented to address have been fully addressed. Genres are distinct from styles, which come and go: there are Expressionist portraits, Cubist portraits, Impressionist portraits, Norman Rockwell portraits, etc. Style is the endless variation within genre.

Setting aside the formal dissimilarities between these two forms—of framing, of technique—traditional photographic self-portraiture is far less spontaneous and casual than a selfie. This new genre isn't dominated by artists. When made by amateurs, traditional photographic self-portraiture didn't have a codified look or transform into social dialogue and conversation. These pictures were not usually disseminated to strangers and were never made in such numbers by so many people. It's possible that the selfie is the most prevalent popular genre ever.

Let's stipulate that most selfies are silly, typical, boring. Guys flexing muscles, girls making pouty lips ("duckface"), people mugging in bars or throwing gang signs or posing with monuments or someone famous. Still, the new genre has its earmarks. Excluding those taken in mirrors—a distinct subset of this universe—selfies are nearly always taken from within an arm's length of the subject. For this reason the cropping and composition of selfies are very different from those of all preceding self-portraiture. There is the near-constant visual presence of one of the photographer's arms, typically the one holding the camera. Bad camera angles predominate, as the subject is nearly always off-center. The wide-angle lens on most cell-phone cameras exaggerates the depth of noses and chins, and the arm holding the camera often looks huge. (Over time, this distortion has become less noticeable. Recall, however, the skewed look of the early cell-phone snap.) If both your hands are in the picture and it's not a mirror shot, technically, it's not a selfie—it's a portrait.

Selfies are usually casual, improvised, and fast; their primary purpose is to be seen here, now, by other people, most of them unknown, in social networks. They are never accidental; whether carefully staged or completely casual, any selfie that you see had to be approved by the sender before being embedded into a network. This implies control as well as the presence of performing, self-criticality, and irony. The distributor of a selfie made it to be looked at by us, right now, and when we look at it, we know that. We are aware that we are receiving an image with intention behind it. And the maker knows we know that. The critic Alicia Eler notes that selfies allow us to "become our own biggest fans and private paparazzi," and they are "ways for celebrities to pretend they're just like regular people, making themselves their own controlled PR machines."

Selfies aren't just of ourselves, they are from ourselves. The genre comes from all; they are a folk art that is already expanding the language and lexicon of photography. Selfies are a photography of modern life—not that academics or curators are paying much attention to them. They might,

though. In a hundred years, the mass of selfies will be an incredible record of the fine details of everyday life. Imagine what we could see if we had millions of these from the streets of imperial Rome. The mass of these images are of cultural, historical, and anthropological importance; however, it's still unclear whether they are anything other than a fascinating footnote in the world of art.

Whatever the selfie represents, it's safe to say it's in its Neolithic phase. In fact, the genre has already mutated at least once. Artist John Monteith has saved thousands of anonymous images from the selfie's early digital era, what Monteith calls the "Wild West days" of selfies. These are self-portraits taken with crude early webcams, showing weird coloration, hot spots, bizarre resolution. Posted online starting around 1999, they have mostly evaporated into the ethersphere. The "aesthetic" of these early selfie calling cards and come-ons is noticeably different from today's, because the cameras were deskbound. Settings are more private, poses more furtive (and often sexual). Motifs seemed somehow uninspired and flat: women showing new tongue piercings, shirtless men with nunchucks. They seem as ancient as photographs of nineteenth-century Paris.

Selfie as Revelation



We've all taken them. So has almost everyone you know. Selfies can be front-page news, subject to intense, widespread public and private scrutiny, shaming, or revelation. President Obama caught hell for taking selfies with world leaders. Kim Kardashian takes them of her butt. The pope takes them [1]. James Franco has been called "the selfie king" [2].



Many fret that this explosion of selfies proves that ours is an unusually narcissistic age. Discussing one selfie, *The Washington Post* wrote they represented "the greater global calamity of Western decline." Marina Galperina, who with fellow curator Kyle Chayka presented the National #Selfie Portrait Gallery, rightly says, "It's less about narcissism—narcissism is so lonely!—and it's more about being your own digital avatar." Chayka adds, "Smartphone selfies come out of the same impulse as Rembrandt's... to make yourself look awesome." Franco says selfies "are tools of communication more than marks of vanity... Mini-Mes that we send out to give others a sense of who we are." Selfies are our letters to the world. They are little visual diaries that magnify, reduce, dramatize—that say, "I'm here; look at me."

Unlike traditional portraiture, selfies don't make pretentious claims. They go in the other direction—or no direction at all. Although theorists like Susan Sontag and Roland Barthes saw

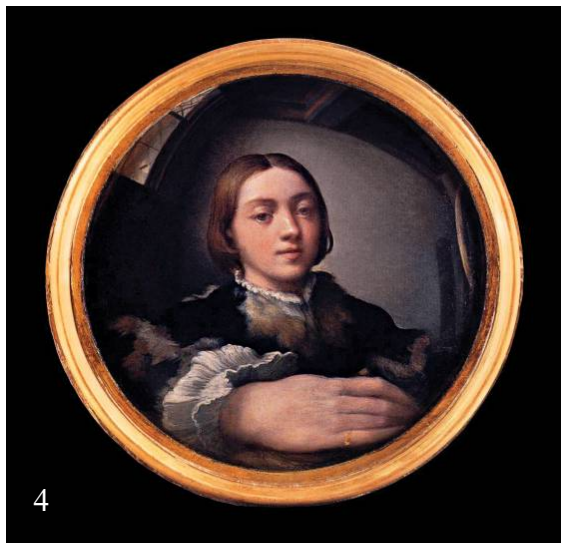
melancholy and signs of death in every photograph, selfies aren't for the ages. They are for the now.

Selfies remind us other art-historical portraits, and we may detect their visual DNA from these older structures. There are old photos of people holding cameras out to take their own pictures. Often, people did this to knock off the last frame in a roll of film, so it could be rewound and sent to be processed. Still, the genre remains unclear, nebulous, and uncoded.

Maybe the first significant twentieth-century pre-selfie is M.C. Escher's 1935 lithograph "Hand With Reflecting Sphere" [3]. Its strange compositional structure is dominated by the artist's distorted face, reflected in a convex mirror held in his hand and showing his weirdly foreshortened arm. It echoes the closeness, shallow depth, and odd cropping of modern selfies. In another image, which might be called an allegory of a selfie, Escher rendered a hand drawing another hand drawing the first hand. It almost says, "What comes first, the self or the selfie?"

One significant proto-selfie is Parmigianino's 1523–24 "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror." All the attributes of the selfie are here: the subject's face from a bizarre angle, the elongated arm, foreshortening, compositional distortion, the close-in intimacy. [4]

Some selfies metamorphose into what might be called selfies-plus—pictures that begin to speak in unintended tongues, that carry surpluses of meaning that the maker may not have known were there. Barthes wrote that such images produce what he called "a third meaning," which passes "from language to significance."



Everyone's subject to these unveilings. These unstable, obstinate meanings can reveal fictions, paranoia, fantasies, voyeurism, exhibitionism, confessions—things that take us to a place where we become the author of another story. Those surprise meanings are thrilling, necessitate approval (likes) and comments (approval or ridicule); they seem to be something *like* art. Take, for example, a photo posted in July, 2013 by John Quirke [5]. The picture itself is nothing; a twenty-something, shot from below in what looks like a basement.

Selfie from the gas chamber in Auschwitz. #selfie
#respect pic.twitter.com/OboL4Kfuby

2:03 PM - 11 Jul 2013

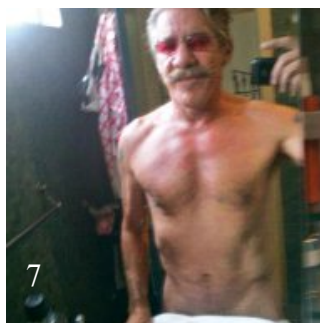


Mouth agape, eyes wide open, he wears headphones. The impact of the picture comes in Quirke's tag: "Selfie from the gas chamber in Auschwitz." Through this, the picture exceeds itself, vaults outside meaning, and becomes what Barthes described as "locatable but not describable." Image and text merge in ways that add revelation: meaning, insight, judgment. There are similar pictures of people at Chernobyl, in front of car wrecks, with a suicide taking place over one's shoulder. Most include dry, sardonic, and cold captions that demonstrate either horrific ignorance or equally horrific awareness.

We can't merely dismiss these as violations of sanctified spaces or lapses of judgment. War correspondents catch images of people being blown to bits. Many of us have taken pictures of homeless people, Dealey Plaza in Dallas, an electric chair, the hole left by the World Trade Center prior to reconstruction. The new twist of the selfie is that we're *in* these pictures. Many are in bad taste, and some indulge in shock value for shock value's sake, but they are, nevertheless, reactions to death, fear, confusion, terror, or annihilation. The world grows dark before our eyes in selfies like these.

What They Don't Say (But Still Reveal)

The bizarre side of the mirror is Kim Kardashian's now-famous picture of her ass [6]. The pose is utterly banal; she's like millions of others admiring themselves in mirrors, trying to show some part of their body to best advantage. Kardashian goes a step further. As she gets everything to show while admiring her own image in the phone, the third meaning that pops out is not her body. It's how weirdly managed the scene is. Her body is blatantly visible while her décor is carefully blocked off by screens. Her ass is intentionally outlined, but she doesn't want us to see her sofa. Kim has even authored four rules for the perfect selfie: "Hold your phone high [as you shoot]; know your angle; know your lighting; and no duckface!"



Equally idiotic winds of third meaning blow through other recent celebrity selfies. Seventy-year-old Geraldo Rivera's selfie shows him gazing at his body in a bathroom mirror [7], naked but for a disturbingly low-slung towel. Unlike third meanings that tell us something new, selfies like this confirm what we already know. (Here, we are reminded that Geraldo is a self-involved publicity-loving creep.) It's no different from those celebrity porn films that are self-released accidentally-on-purpose, either to remake images or out of simple sociopathology.



Then there's the subcategory of what might be called the Selfie Sublime: an extraordinary moment, photographed to *incorporate* the shooter's own astonishment. We see it in astronaut Aki Hoshide's selfie hovering in space [8], his silver helmet showing none of his features, the Sun behind him, the Earth reflected in his visor.

We continue to be fascinated by selfies like this, demonstrating or failing to demonstrate some texture of meaning that the subjects may or may not understand, but its meaning is conveyed to the audience. In 2014, *Buzzfeed*, *Dailymail.com*, and other pop-

news sites carried this selfie with the title, "A Mother and Son Took a Selfie On The Doomed Malaysia Airlines Flight Just Before Takeoff." The selfie's power comes from its juxtaposition with its title and context rather than from the image itself [9].



The most famous selfie of 2013 has never actually been released. When President Obama, British prime minister David Cameron, and Danish prime minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt took a group selfie at Nelson Mandela's memorial service [10], we saw only Roberto Schmidt's



photograph of them doing so. Many bellowed about the Obama selfie's gall and pomposity (not well-hidden by the First Lady). Its third meaning, however, is far more human. It's the invisible thought balloon over the subjects. "It is totally incomprehensible, even to us, to be us," they are saying, "or to be us, being here." It pictures three famous people engaged in what Hegel called "picture-thinking." Or selfie-thinking.

Art History, Art Future

The selfie is something significant. Way back in 2010, the artist-critic David Colman wrote in *The New York Times* that the selfie “is so common that it is changing photography itself.” Colman in turn quoted the art historian Geoffrey Batchen saying that selfies represent “the shift of the photograph [from] memorial function to a communication device.” What we may love most about selfies is that once taken, we then do a second thing after making them: we make them public. Which is, again, something like art.

Adapted from Jerry Saltz’s “Art at Arm’s Length: A History of the Selfie.” *New York Magazine* 3 February 2014. Print.