

## Contemporary Nuances

### Table of Contents

[The Best Cook in the World: Tales from My Momma's Table by Rick Bragg \[A Borzoi Book, Alfred A. Knopf, 9781400040414\]](#)

[All Over but the Shoutin' by Rick Bragg \[Vintage, 978-0679774020\]](#)

[Ava's Man by Rick Bragg \[Knopf, 9780375410628\]](#)

[The Most They Ever Had by Rick Bragg \[University Alabama Press, 9780817356835\]](#)

[My Southern Journey: True Stories from the Heart of the South by Rick Bragg \[Southern Living, 9780848746391\]](#)

[Beneath a Ruthless Sun: A True Story of Violence, Race, and Justice Lost and Found by Gilbert King \[Riverhead, 9780399183386\]](#)

[The Girl Who Smiled Beads: A Story of War and What Comes After by Clemantine Wamariya and Elizabeth Weil \[Crown, 9780451495327\]](#)

[Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress by Steven Pinker \[Viking, 9780525427575\]](#)

[The Fears of the Rich, The Needs of the Poor: My Years at the CDC by William H. Foege \[Johns Hopkins University Press, 9781421425290\]](#)

[AIQ: How People and Machines Are Smarter Together by Nick Poison and James Scott \[St. Martin's Press, 9781250182159\]](#)

[The Strange Order of Things: Life, Feeling, and the Making of Cultures by Antonio Damasio \[Pantheon, 9780307908759\]](#)

[Strength in Stillness: The Power of Transcendental Meditation by Bob Roth \[Simon & Schuster, 9781501161216\]](#)

[Women by the Waterfront: Modernist \(Re\)Visions of Gender, Self and Littoral Space by Kathrin](#)

[Tordasi \[Epistemata Literaturwissenschaft, Königshausen & Neumann, 9783826062650\]](#)

[Storyworld Possible Selves by María-Ángeles Martínez \[Applications of Cognitive Linguistics, De Gruyter Mouton, 9783110522532\]](#)

[Elastic: Flexible Thinking in a Time of Change by Leonard Mlodinow \[Pantheon, 9781101870921\]](#)

[Essay: Conceptual Framework of The Concept of the Individual](#)

[City of the Good: Nature, Religion, and the Ancient Search for What Is Right by Michael Mayerfield Bell \[Princeton University Press, 9780691165097\]](#)

[Law and Literature edited by Kieran Dolin \[Cambridge Critical Concepts, Cambridge University Press, 9781108422819\]](#)

[Thinking with Rousseau: From Machiavelli to Schmitt by Helena Rosenblatt and Paul Schweigert \[Cambridge University Press, 9781107105768\]](#)

[The Alchemists: Questioning our Faith in Courts as Democracy-Builders by Tom Gerald Daly \[Cambridge Studies in Constitutional Law, Cambridge University Press, 9781108417945\]](#)

[The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity 2<sup>nd</sup> edition edited by Robert Frodeman and Julie Thompson Klein \[Oxford Handbooks, Oxford University Press, 9780198733522\]](#)

[Bibliography](#)

[The Best Cook in the World: Tales from My Momma's Table by Rick Bragg \[A Borzoi Book, Alfred A. Knopf, 9781400040414\]](#)

A celebration of family recipes and the perfect gift for Mother's Day.

From the beloved, best-selling author of [All Over but the Shoutin'](#) and , a delectable, rollicking food memoir, cookbook, and loving tribute to a region, a vanishing history, a family, and, especially, to his mother. Including seventy-four mouthwatering Bragg family recipes for classic southern dishes passed down through generations.

Margaret Bragg does not own a single cookbook. She measures in "dabs" and "smidgens" and "tads" and "you know, hon, just some." She cannot be pinned down on how long to bake corn bread ("about 15 to 20 minutes, depending on the mysteries of your oven"). Her notion of farm-to-table is a flatbed truck. But she can tell you the secrets to perfect mashed potatoes, corn pudding, redeye gravy, pinto beans and hambone, stewed cabbage, short ribs, chicken and dressing, biscuits and butter rolls. Many of her recipes, recorded here for the first time, pre-date the Civil War, handed down skillet by skillet, from one generation of Braggs to the next. In *The Best Cook in the World*, Rick Bragg finally preserves his heritage by telling the stories that framed his mother's cooking and education, from childhood into old age. Because good food always has a good story, and a recipe, writes Bragg, is a story like anything else.

Excerpt: Since she was eleven years old, even if all she had to work with was neck bones, peppergrass, or poke salad, she put good food on a plate. She cooked for dead-broke uncles, hungover brothers, shadetree mechanics, faith healers, dice shooters, hairdressers, pipe fitters, crop dusters, high-steel walkers, and well diggers. She cooked for ironworkers, Avon ladies, highway patrolmen, sweatshop seamstresses, fortune-tellers, coal haulers, dirt-track daredevils, and dime-store girls. She cooked for lost souls stumbling home from Aunt Hattie's beer joint, and for singing cowboys on the AM radio. She cooked, in her first eighty years, more than seventy thousand meals, as basic as hot buttered biscuits with pear preserves or muscadine jelly, as exotic as tender braised beef tripe in white milk gravy, in kitchens where the only ventilation was the banging of the screen door. She cooked for people she'd just as soon have poisoned, and for the loves of her life.

She cooked for the rich ladies in town, melting beef short ribs into potatoes and Spanish onions, another woman's baby on her hip, and sleepwalked home to feed her own boys home-canned blackberries dusted with sugar as a late-night snack. She pan-fried chicken in Red's Barbecue with a crust so crisp and thin it was mostly in the imagination, and deep-fried fresh bream and crappie and hush puppies redolent with green onion and government cheese. She seasoned pinto beans with ham bone and baked cracklin' cornbread for old women who had tugged a pick sack, and stewed fat spareribs in creamy butter beans that truck drivers would brag on three thousand miles from home. She spiked collard greens with cane sugar and hot pepper for old men who had fought the Hun on the Hindenburg Line, and simmered chicken and dumplings for mill workers with cotton lint still stuck in their hair. She fried thin apple pies in white butter and cinnamon for pretty young women with bus tickets out of this one-horse town, and baked sweet-potato cobbler for the grimy pipe fitters and dusty bricklayers they left behind. She cooked for big-haired waitresses at the Fuzzy Duck Lounge, shiny-eyed pilgrims at the Congregational Holiness summer campground, and crew-cut teenage boys who read comic books beside her banana pudding, then embarked for Vietnam.

She cooked, most of all, to make it taste good, to make every chipped melamine plate a poor man's banquet, because how do you serve dull food to people such as this? She became famous for it, became the best cook in the world, if the world ends just this side of Cedartown. But she never used a cookbook, not in her whole life. She never cooked from a written recipe of any kind, and never wrote down one of her own. She cooked with ghosts at her sure right hand, and you can believe that or not. The people who taught her the secrets of Southern, blue-collar cooking are all gone now, and they did not cook from a book, either; most of them did not even know how to read and write. Every time the old woman stepped from her workshop of steel spoons, iron skillets, and blackened pots, all she knew about the food left with her, in the way, when a bird flies off a wire, it leaves only a black line on the sky.

"It's all I've ever been real good at, and people always bragged on my cooking ... you know, 'cept the ones who don't know what's good," she told me

when I asked her about her craft. "When I was little, the old women used to sit in their kitchens at them old For-mica tables and drink coffee and tell their fortunes and talk and talk and talk, about their sorry old men and their good food and the good Lord, and they would cook, my God, they could cook.... And I just paid attention, and I done what they done...."

Most chefs, when asked for a blueprint of their food, would only have to reach for a dog-eared notebook or a faded handwritten index card for ingredients, measures, cooking times, and the rest.

"I am not a chef," she said.

Yet she can tell if her flour is getting stale by rubbing it in her fingers.

"I am a cook."

I remember one night, when she was yearning for something sweet, she patted out tiny biscuits and plopped them down in a pool of milk flavored with sugar, cinnamon, vanilla, and cubes of cold butter. She baked this until the liquid, half whole milk, half thick, sweetened condensed milk, steamed into the biscuits, infusing them with the flavors underneath. It created not a dense slab, like a traditional, New Orleans—style bread pudding, but little islands of perfect sweet, buttery dumplings; the spacing, not the ingredients or cooking time, was the secret here. "Momma taught it to me, and Grandpa Bundrum taught it to her, and his momma taught it to him, and ... well, I guess I don't really know no further than that."

In the roadside cafés, cooks in hairnets with Semper Fi on their forearms taught her to build the perfect burger from layers of charred, thin patties, melting cheese, rings of sweet Vidalia onion, and wheels of fresh tomato. They taught her crisp, fork-tender chicken-fried steak, and how to dress steamed foot-long hot dogs with homemade hot chili, just the right trickle of yellow mustard, and lots of finely diced onion, to make the pulpwooders weep. She learned to slow-cook pork barbecue from old men who lived in the smoke itself. "The workin' people wouldn't pay good money for food that wasn't fit to eat. I didn't make no money in a café ... fourteen or fifteen dollars a week was the most I made. But at Red's café we got all the puddin' we could eat. Your uncle Ed's momma, Granny Fair, waitressed at Red's when I was there. You remember her? She

was kind of a big woman? Well, she'd bust through the double doors to that kitchen, snatch up one of them little chocolate puddin's, and eat it in three bites on a dead run—and not miss a step."

Her big sister, Edna, taught her to fillet catfish, crappie, and tiny bream with a knife as thin as aluminum foil. A brother-in-law, a navy man, taught her how to pat out a fine cathead biscuit, but could only bake them a battleship at a time. Her mother-in-law showed her how to craft wild-plum pies, peach, apple, and cherry cobblers, and cool banana puddings, all in pans as big as she was. Her daddy shared the secrets of fresh ham and perfect redeye gravy, and tender country-fried steak. And her momma taught her to do it all, even with a worried mind. Then, finally, it was her time, and it has been for a long, long time.

"I have to talk to myself now to cook," she said. "I have to tell myself what to do, have to tell myself to handle the knife by the right end. I have to call myself a name, so I'll know to listen to myself."

"By what name," I asked, beginning to be concerned, "do you call yourself?"

"Why, I use my name, hon. I ain't so far gone I don't know my name. I'll say, 'Margaret, don't burn yourself,' and 'Margaret, close the cabinet so you won't bump your head.' It's when I do call myself by somebody else's name that y'all got to worry about me. Till then, hon, I'm alllll right."

She had hoped for a daughter to pass her skills and stories to—that or a thoughtful son, someone worthy of the history, secrets, and lore; instead, she got three nitwit boys who would eat a bug on a bet and still cannot do much more than burn a weenie on a sharp stick, and could not bake a passable biscuit even if you handed us one of those whop-'em cans from the Piggly Wiggly and prayed for bread. We ate her delicious food without much insight into how it came to be, which was not all our fault. She banned us from her kitchen outright, much of our lives, because we tracked in red mud, coal dust, or some more terrible contaminant, or tried to show her a new species of tadpole as she made biscuit. We are still barely tolerated there, though I have not stomped in a mud hole or hidden a toad in my overalls for a long time. So she would be the end of it, then, the end of the story of her table, unless we could find another way.

I made up my mind to do this book not on a day when my mother was in her kitchen, making miracles, but on a day she was not. Most days, unless she is deep in Ecclesiastes, or Randolph Scott is riding a tall horse across the TV screen, she will be at her stove, singing about a church in the wildwood, or faded love, or trains. In the mornings, the clean scent of just- sliced cantaloupe will drift through the house, mingling with eggs scrambled with crumbled sausage, and coffee so strong and dark that black is its true color, not just the way you take it. At noon, the air will be thick with the aroma of stewed cabbage, sweet corn, cornbread muffins, and creamed onions going tender in an iron skillet forged before the First Great War. Some nights, you can smell fried chicken livers as far as the pasture fence, or barbecued pork chops, pan-roasted pig's feet, potatoes and pole beans, or blackberry cobbler in a buttered biscuit crust. But as I walked into the house in the winter of 2016, to find some clothes to take to her hospital room, the kitchen smelled only of lemon-scented dishwashing detergent, and a faint aroma of old, cold, burnt iron.

In her life, she saw weeds creep over the Model T, and church steeples vanish beneath the man-made lakes of the TVA. She saw great blast furnaces go up, and go dark, and ancestral mountains clearcut down to bald nobs. She saw circus trains, and funeral trains, and the first gleaming diesel engine roar through these hills. She saw a Russian monkey in a spaceman suit, and figured, well, now she had seen it all. "It made me sad, when they shot him into outer space. They showed him on the TV again when he come back down, but I ain't sure it was the right monkey, you know, the same one." The point is, I had convinced myself she was somehow immune to passing time, that she lived outside and above the events of the twentieth century, and the twenty-first. She could no more wear out than the whetstone she used to sharpen her ancient butcher knives, even if she had seasoned most of the vegetables she ever ate with pork fat.

"Gettin' old ain't easy," she told me, as she passed seventy-nine, "but it's best not to try and fight it too much. You know how I live with bein' old? I just don't look in the mirror, 'cept when I part my hair."

She passed eighty in April of 2017 with a baseball bat beside her bed, for assassins. In the past five years, she survived heart failure, serious cancer,

dangerous surgeries, and harsh follow-up treatments that left her thinner and weaker over time. Still, I rarely saw her stumble, or waver in her resolve to live as she always has, to walk her garden, gripe about the weather, and rattle her pots and pans. She survived everything, but in the late winter of 2016, the hospital entrance had become a revolving door, and she was admitted and readmitted for regimens of strong medicine and rest. Again, the young doctors said she would recover, if she would eat the dull, bland food and drink the foul-tasting medicine that was made, she believed, from the manure in her donkey pasture. She could go home again, the doctors told us, if she would behave herself, and if, after so many hard, hot, long days, she still had the will. She was not an ideal patient.

"That stent they put in my heart a year or two ago, well, they didn't really have to do that," she grumbled from her bed. "That was just the style then. Ever'body was gettin' one. I didn't need it. I was fine."

She spent most of the spring on an IV. While she slept, my big brother and I talked quietly beside her bed about being boys, running buck wild through her kitchen, about big fish, and ugly dogs, and a pearl-white '67 Camaro he never let me drive. The past is where we go when we are helpless; the past, no matter what the psychiatrists say, can't really hurt you much more than it already has, not like the future, which comes at you like a train around a blind curve. But our conversation always circled back to the thing that mattered most. I am not a particularly optimistic man, and feared for her. Sam told me I was being foolish. She would get better this time, too; it was just a matter of time before she got tired of this place and walked out, grumbling. He said he knew her better than I did; he was living his life within three miles of her, while I went gallivanting God knows where. He said the same thing over and over, like a prayer. "That old woman picked cotton ... did stuff the regular people can't do. They don't know who she is."

"Do you remember the junk stoves? Remember that graveyard?" he asked me one evening, and I shook my head. He seemed deeply disappointed in me, as if I had somehow failed my heritage by not remembering every anthill, blown-over willow tree, vicious blackberry bush, and rotted-down rope

swing on the Roy Webb Road. "How," he asked me, "do you not remember that many burnt-out stoves?"

And then I did remember them, a ragged row of scorched, rusted relics banished to the deep backyard, worn out, shorted out, and dragged out of the little frame house to a place past the rusty bicycle junkyard and the doghouse, to the edge of the cotton field. The years bring down everything here, in the heat, damp, and rot, but it takes a lot of rust to wipe away a General Electric. The number varied, but at one time there were thirteen derelict stoves abandoned there, bound to the earth by honeysuckle, briars, and creeping vines: Westinghouse, Kenmore, Hotpoint, GE, and more, in white, brown, and avocado. She used them till there was a near electrocution, or an electrical fire, till there was not a spark left.

"Momma wore 'em all slap-out, one after another," he said. "She cooked every meal we ate, seven days a week ... except when she got us all a foot-long from Pee Wee Johnson's café, every payday, every Friday night. To be honest, I guess most of them of stoves was second- and third-hand to start with, but it's still a lot of stoves, ain't it? Just think ... think what it took to wear out that many stoves."

"I had a big forty-two-inch stove in my kitchen one time, when we lived with Momma," the old woman said from the hospital bed, her eyes still closed. She pretended to be asleep sometimes, so she could

hear what was being said about her. "But it wasn't no-'count, to start with. I melted the buttons off of it."

There, in Room 411, she even dreamed of food, or maybe just remembered it. She saw herself waist-deep in rows of fat, ripe toma-toes hanging heavy on vines that ran green for as far as she could see. She reached into a vine and pulled one free, rubbed it clean on her shirt, and took a saltshaker from a pocket of her clothes. She ate it, standing in the blowing red grit, salting every delicious bite, until it was all gone, the way she'd done when she was young. She told me about it later, amid the alarms of the IV machines, the barking intercom, and call buttons that never went quiet, even at 3:00 a.m. "And it just seemed so real I could taste it," she said, and I told her she must be on some fine dope if she could taste a dream.

She lay there day after day, and planned what she would cOok once she got home, what she would grow in her garden and pepper pots, or gather in the woods and fields for jellies, preserves, and pickles.

"I lost the spring," she told me one morning, after a particularly bad few days, and for some reason that simple declaration haunted me more than anything else. "I lost one whole spring."

I would like to say that something profound happened after that, something poetic. The truth is, as my big brother predicted, she just got mad. It bothered her that she could not tell if she was dreaming or remembering, there in her narrow bed, and she told the nurses, "I don't want no more of that strong dope." She had eaten very little in the hospital; the cooks did not know how to use a saltshaker, she said. It irked her that her vegetable garden was still deep in weeds with hot weather coming on, and that she had to dream a ripe tomato to get a good one. One night, she just opened her eyes, demanded some Hi Ho crackers, an ice-cold Fanta orange soda, and her shoes. "And tell the nurses," she said, "tomorrow I'm goin' home."

I told her the doctors would have to decide.

"Well," she said, "doctors don't know everything, do they?"

I told her a little more rest, just a few more days of care, fluids, and observation in her hospital bed, under the kind and careful watch of the fine nurses and doctors, could not do her any harm.

"You don't know about Irene," she said.

I told her I did not remember any Irenes.

"She was my cousin, I guess, and she was trouble, son, trouble all her life. She argued three days over what color dress to bury my aunt Biller in, and Aunt Riller was still alive, still a-layin' in that hospital bed, listenin' to her. Don't tell me there ain't no harm can come to you in a hospital room..."

"If I can just get home, I'll cook me some poke salad, and I'll cure myself.... And I'll tell you something else. Salt is good. It says so in the Bible."

You learn, if you live long enough down here, not to push too much against what these old, hardheaded people believe. If an old woman tells

you there is magic in an iron pot, you ought not smile at that. "The iron gets in you, through the food," she believes. "It gets in your blood, and strengthens you." I have heard French chefs say the same, but the old people who raised her believe the iron left something much more powerful than a mere trace of mineral; it left something from the blast furnace itself, a kind of ferocity. But how do you explain that to heathens? She has cooked in iron all her life, and she is cooking in it now.

But since that day in her cold kitchen, I knew I had to convince her to let me write it all down, to capture not just the legend but the soul of her cooking for the generations to come, and translate into the twenty-first century the recipes that exist only in her mind, before we all just blow away like the dust in that red field.

[All Over but the Shoutin'](#) by Rick Bragg [Vintage, 978-0679774020]

This haunting, harrowing, gloriously moving recollection of a life on the American margin is the story of Rick Bragg, who grew up dirt-poor in northeastern Alabama, seemingly destined for either the cotton mills or the penitentiary, and instead became a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter for The New York Times. It is the story of Bragg's father, a hard-drinking man with a murderous temper and the habit of running out on the people who needed him most.

But at the center of this soaring memoir is Bragg's mother, who went eighteen years without a new dress so that her sons could have school clothes and picked other people's cotton so that her children wouldn't have to live on welfare alone. Evoking these lives--and the country that shaped and nourished them--with artistry, honesty, and compassion, Rick Bragg brings home the love and suffering that lie at the heart of every family. The result is unforgettable.

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This is a book about getting even with life.

It is the story of a young woman who absorbed the cruelties of her husband, an alcoholic, haunted Korean War veteran, until she could stand it no more, then gave up her whole life for her children. By picking cotton, cleaning toilets for the gentry, doing worse, she made sure that her three surviving

sons would not have to walk around ashamed, in ragged clothes.

In a smaller way it is my story, the boy who climbed up her backbone and made it out of that ring of poverty and ignorance, free and clean. It is about what I did with the life she gave me, and how I tried to repay her, and how I tried--and failed so miserably--to rewrite the past.

The book is set in rural northeastern Alabama, and chronicles a poor, white trash family through three generations. The first third of the book is mostly about her and him, and us, me and my brothers, as babies. It shows the agony of the death of a baby brother who did not have to die, who didn't even get a name.

It also takes us with my father to Korea. He tugged me there, the last time I saw him alive, when I was just 16. The tales of terror he told me there still sit like a broken bottle in my mind.

The second third is about the wonderful life she gave me, the exotic, dark places I went, taking her spirit with me, like a talisman. It takes us to Haiti, to the transvestite hookers in the Village, to death row in Angola, Louisiana.

The last part is the getting even part, where a woman who had never been on a plane, never been higher than a second-story bathroom floor, travels to New York to see her son receive a Pulitzer Prize, and more. It ends with me keeping my promise to buy her a house, a real house, with my bitter victory over my dead father, and my sad defeat to the realization that no amount of brick and mortar will wall up the past, will let us, as a family, start new.

I feature, briefly, an alcoholic brother who seems to have absorbed the demons that killed my father in 1976. And I admit, finally, to having absorbed them myself.

On its lighter side, it is a story of vindication. People speak to my mother now, on the street. On its darker side, it is all about revenge. Failed revenge.

\*\*\*My Grandfather on my daddy's side and my grandma on my momma's side used to try and cuss their miseries away. They could out-cuss any damn body I have ever seen. I am only an amateur cusser at best, but I inherited other things from these

people who grew up on the ridges and deep in the hollows of northeastern Alabama, the foothills of the Appalachians. They taught me, on a thousand front porch nights, as a million jugs passed from hand to hand, how to tell a story.

I make my living at it now, as a national correspondent for The New York Times, based in my native South (Atlanta). It was my dream to do this someday, but some things even I was afraid to dream.

In 1996, I was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing, for what the judges called "elegantly written stories on contemporary America." They included stories on the country sheriff who caught Susan Smith, an Alabama prison where old inmates go to die, a Mississippi washerwoman who became a national hero, and the nightmare bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City. I also won the prestigious American Society of Newspaper Editor's Distinguished Writing Award, for the second time. I have won more than 40 journalism awards, including several awards that might have actually helped people.

But the best thing that happened to me in 1996 was the contract for this book, which allowed me to keep a promise I had made to my mother--a woman who picked cotton, scrubbed floors and took in washing and ironing--who went 18 years without a new dress so I could have school clothes. With the advance from this book, I bought her a house, the first house she ever owned.

I teach writing at the Poynter Institute for media studies, at National Writers Workshops around the country. I taught some workshops at Harvard, and several newspapers have asked me to do in-house writing workshops, including The Times.

My stories are included in several "best of" collections of newspaper writing. I have written for the New York Times Sunday

Magazine, and others.

For good or bad, I am kind of unusual for a Times man. I have been at The Times for just three years, for the first six months on Metro in New York, writing about the homeless, violence, welfare hotels, other miseries, then covered Haiti for more than two months during the worst of the killing there in the late summer and the fall of 1994. I came home to find that I had been promoted to the

national desk. They sent me home, almost, to Atlanta.

Before The Times, I worked briefly at The Los Angeles Times, a failed experiment, and before that as a roving national correspondent for the St. Petersburg Times. In 1992-93, I was a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University, the only real college I ever had. I think I was filling their white trash quota. I went just six months to Jacksonville State University, in Alabama, in the 1970s.

Before the Nieman, I was the St. Petersburg Times Miami Bureau Chief, covering south Florida, Haiti, the outbreak of the Gulf War, and other balmy places. Before Florida, I was a reporter in my native Alabama, at The Birmingham News, Anniston Star, Talladega Daily Home and Jacksonville News. I wrote about cockfights, speed trap towns, serial killers, George Wallace, Bear Bryant, and Richard Petty.

I was born in a small town hospital in northeastern Alabama on July 26, 1959. My momma went into labor about three-quarters of the way through the "Ten Commandments," which was showing at the Midway Drive-In. I am not making this up. I think it's in Chapter Four.

Since then, I have lived in Jacksonville, Anniston and Birmingham, all in Alabama, in Clearwater, Bradenton, Miami and St. Petersburg, in Florida, and Cambridge, Massachusetts, Los Angeles, the corner of 110th and Broadway, New York City, and now Atlanta. I spend at least a quarter of the year in New Orleans, for The Times.

I am seldom at home. I am not married. If I had a dog, it would starve.

[Ava's Man](#) by Rick Bragg [Knopf, 9780375410628]

From the winner of the Pulitzer Prize, Rick Bragg continues his personal saga begun in the critically acclaimed, [All Over but the Shoutin'](#): a personal history of the Deep South with an evocation of his mother's childhood in the Appalachian foothills during the Great Depression, and the magnificent story of the man who raised her.

Charlie Bundrum was a roofer, a carpenter, a whiskey-maker, a fisherman who knew every inch of the Coosa River, made boats out of car hoods and knew how to pack a wound with brown sugar



to stop the blood. He could not read, but he asked his wife, Ava, to read him the paper every day so he would not be ignorant. He was a man who took giant steps in rundown boots, a true hero whom history would otherwise have overlooked.

In the decade of the Great Depression, Charlie moved his family twenty-one times, keeping seven children one step ahead of the poverty and starvation that threatened them from every side. He worked at the steel mill when the steel was rolling, or for a side of bacon or a bushel of peaches when it wasn't. He paid the doctor who delivered his fourth daughter, Margaret—Bragg's mother—with a jar of whiskey. He understood the finer points of the law as it applied to poor people and drinking men; he was a banjo player and a buck dancer who worked off fines when life got a little sideways, and he sang when he was drunk, where other men fought or cussed. He had a talent for living.

His children revered him. When he died, cars lined the blacktop for more than a mile.

Rick Bragg has built a soaring monument to the grandfather he never knew—a father who stood by his family in hard times and left a backwoods legend behind—in a book that blazes with his love for his family, and for a particular stretch of dirt road along the Alabama-Georgia border. A powerfully intimate piece of American history as it was experienced by the working people of the Deep South, a glorious record of a life of character, tenacity and indomitable joy and an unforgettable tribute to a vanishing culture, Ava's Man is Rick Bragg at his stunning best.

[The Most They Ever Had](#) by Rick Bragg [University Alabama Press, 9780817356835]

In the spring of 2001, a community of people in the Appalachian foothills of northern Alabama had come to the edge of all they had ever known. Across the South, padlocks and logging chains bound the doors of silent mills, and it seemed a miracle to blue-collar people in Jacksonville that their mill still bit, shook, and roared. The century-old hardwood floors still trembled under whirling steel, and people worked on, in a mist of white air. The mill had become almost a living thing, rewarding the hardworking and careful with the best payday they ever had, but punishing the careless and clumsy, taking a finger, a hand, more.

The mill was here before the automobile, before the flying machine, and the mill workers served it even as it filled their lungs with lint and shortened their lives. In return, it let them live in stiff-necked dignity in the hills of their fathers. So, when death did come, no one had to ship their bodies home on a train. This is a mill story—not of bricks, steel, and cotton, but of the people who suffered it to live.

[My Southern Journey: True Stories from the Heart of the South](#) by Rick Bragg [Southern Living, 9780848746391]

From Rick Bragg comes a poignant and wryly funny collection of essays on life in the south.

Keenly observed and written with his insightful and deadpan sense of humor, he explores enduring Southern truths about home, place, spirit, table, and the regions' varied geographies, including his native Alabama, Cajun country, and the Gulf Coast. Everything is explored, from regional obsessions from college football and fishing, to mayonnaise and spoonbread, to the simple beauty of a fish on the hook.

Collected from over a decade of his writing, with many never-before-published essays written specifically for this edition, *My Southern Journey* is an entertaining and engaging read, especially for Southerners (or feel Southern at heart) and anyone who appreciates great writing.

[The Fears of the Rich, The Needs of the Poor: My Years at the CDC](#) by William H. Foege [Johns Hopkins University Press, 9781421425290]

In its seventy years, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has evolved from a malaria control program to an institution dedicated to improving health for all people across the world.

[The Fears of the Rich, The Needs of the Poor](#) is a revealing account of the CDC's development by its former director, public health luminary William H. Foege.

Dr. Foege tells the stories of pivotal moments in public health, including the eradication of smallpox (made possible due in part to Foege's research) and the discovery of Legionnaires' disease, Reye syndrome, toxic shock syndrome, and HIV/AIDS. With good humor and optimism, he recounts the various crises he surmounted, from threats of terrorist attacks to contentious congressional hearings and funding cuts. Highlighting the people



who made possible some of public health's biggest successes, Foege outlines the work required behind the scenes and describes the occasional tensions between professionals in the field and the politicians in charge of oversight.

In recent years, global public health initiatives have come from unanticipated sources. Giants in the field now include President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, who promote programs aimed at neglected diseases. Melinda and Bill Gates have invigorated the field through research and direct program support, especially in the area of vaccine-preventable diseases. And the Merck Mectizan program has dramatically reduced river blindness in Africa. Foege has been involved in all of these efforts, among others, and he brings to this book the knowledge and wisdom derived from a long and accomplished career. [The Fears of the Rich, The Needs of the Poor](#) is an inviting but unvarnished account of that career and offers a plethora of lessons for those interested in public health.

## CONTENTS

Preface

A Threat

Security: How Much Is Enough?

Lassa and Ebola

A Short History of the CDC

The Fears of the Rich and the Needs of the Poor

Balancing Babies and the Marketplace

Toxic Shock: Unexpected Deaths from an Improved Product

Serendipity and Unexpected Paths

The Mysterious Deaths of Veterans

An Unexpected Return to the CDC

ii. Disaster Relief

Smallpox Claims Its Last Victims

Coming into the United States: New Americans

Organizing for Success

Vaccines: The Foundation of Public Health

Do No Harm

Global Health: Sharing Our Science

Positive Politics

Toxic Politics

Reye Syndrome: Following the Evidence

Comic Relief

Reducing the Toll of Injuries

Uncommon People

AIDS: Overwhelming Public Health

Blind Spots

On Budgets and Burglars

Acknowledgments

Appendix. Voices in My Head  
References  
Index

Excerpt: Modern public health can be traced to May 14, 1796, when Edward Jenner inoculated a young boy, James Phipps, with cowpox material taken from a sore on the hand of Sarah Nelmes, a milkmaid infected with cowpox. Jenner was trying to mimic nature. He had observed that milkmaids appeared to be protected from smallpox disease. A subsequent attempt to infect Phipps with smallpox was unsuccessful. The boy had been protected by the cowpox inoculation.

Although many references to prevention and public health are found in both biblical and other historic writings, Jenner's success marked the first time an actual tool was available to improve individual health and the health of people in the aggregate. Modern public health was now possible.

Linking public health, and specifically the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to Jenner's work is an acknowledgment of our debt to that event. The CDC originally focused on communicable diseases, and immunizations and vaccines continue to be the foundation of public health. But the field has been expanded in one lifetime to encompass occupational hazards, environmental problems, intentional and unintentional injuries, chronic diseases, and mental health. The mission now embraces all types of barriers to health—biological, chemical, behavioral, violent, and environmental—and recognizes positive ways to enhance quality of life.

I have been a list keeper throughout my life, keeping track of countries visited, trips taken, books read, quotations recalled, and lessons learned. Over the years, I have been intrigued by mentors I have never met, except through reading, and I have tried to divine what advice they might have had for me at different junctures in my life. Many of these influences, in one form or another, made it into this book.

This book is not a history of the CDC nor is it a history of public health or the breadth of CDC activities. It is a collection of stories. By telling these stories, I hope to illuminate the roles that, thanks to the CDC, my colleagues and I played at important

moments in the history of global health and to reveal some of the lessons learned along the way.

### Blind Spots

Tradition is the DNA of our beliefs. The pull of tradition helps explain the strong emotions that accompany religious beliefs, political leanings, cultural values, and even food preferences.

In public health, one of the great challenges is to promote behavior change. We are all saddled with beliefs that make it hard to change, even in the face of great evidence. Tradition leads to many blind spots.

To reach a conclusion that was not held by my parents once seemed almost disrespectful. But then it became clear to me that they had raised us to think independently. My mother would reinforce this after a discussion on why we had reached a different conclusion, by saying, "You are never too old to learn from your children."

We all have blind spots. I am surprised at some of the things I believed even ten years ago, and I wonder how I could have been so blind. Likewise is the surprise of learning that large segments of the population can believe something long after it is proven untrue. Consider the evidence for global warming, which seems beyond the grasp of many in Congress, or the studies showing no relationship between vaccines and autism, which many refuse to accept. False beliefs in these two areas have a direct and negative impact on public health. But the mystery is larger.

### Evolution

About half of the US population does not believe in evolution. Darwin was influenced by his religious grandfather, who used selective breeding to improve his domestic animals. This practice requires some understanding of evolution and the belief that it is possible to alter its course and speed. Every microbiologist sees evolution unfolding, sometimes within days. As mentioned earlier, the Westminster Dog Show is a convincing demonstration of evolution, as every breed exhibited has descended, through evolution, from wolves. Most scientists accept evolution as fact and proceed from there.

But half the population nevertheless believes that evolution is not compatible with religious beliefs and is therefore unable to take an open view of

the evidence. There are plenty of ways to reconcile evolution with religious beliefs. Blind rejection is not one of them.

### Women as Voters

Democracy holds leaders responsible to voters. This accountability is a powerful tool in causing political leaders to improve public health services, such as vaccines, safe water and food, clean air, and a safe environment. It becomes even more valuable if women also have the chance to vote and thereby influence public health decisions of political leaders. Mass delusion is yet another aspect of tradition, and so for almost a century and a half, the American tradition denied women the right to vote. There are still some who would argue that women should not be allowed to vote in this country. But their arguments do not carry the weight that they did 200 years ago. It is difficult for us to understand that once many men actually believed that their wives and mothers did not have the capacity to make an informed and intelligent choice in the voting booth but were able to make an informed and intelligent choice in choosing a husband.

But tradition is so strong that even when we concede the equality of women in voting, we continue our bias in the workplace. And, strangely, the belief that women are inferior continues in some Protestant and Catholic religious orders. To make it more mysterious, 50 percent of these church members, namely, the women, could leave churches that believe that they are not capable of being ministers or priests, but they do not leave. Do they actually believe the idea that they should not have the same rights as men? They do have the vote in the sense that they don't have to put up with it and yet they stay. Tradition.

### Slavery

Throughout history, even in biblical stories, some people accepted the idea that some people should be able to enslave others. It is difficult to find Americans who will espouse that belief today. So how do we explain the lack of common sense that plagued large segments of the US population 160 years ago?

It cannot be explained by intelligence. Thomas Jefferson simply could not bring his intelligence to bear on his personal use of slaves. Likewise, in the 1840s, the president of Emory University led a

committee that decided it was ethical for bishops to own slaves. Tradition often blocks rational thought.

Tradition was so strong that people were willing to die in large numbers to defend the irrational idea of slavery. They were willing to put civilians at risk, destroy homes and crops and families so that slavery would continue. They harmed the public's health. It defies our understanding today.

## Tobacco

"And so it goes," as Kurt Vonnegut would say. While some had early suspicions that tobacco was a hazard to health, it took a surprisingly long time for the degree of that risk to be made clear. The degree of known risk now makes us think that it should have been crystal clear much sooner. But it was not. The early studies on the relationship of tobacco to lung cancer, for example, were weaker than expected because the control groups were often selected from hospitalized persons without lung cancer. Investigators were not aware that tobacco was also responsible for a large proportion of the other hospital admissions, such as heart disease, stroke, and other cancers; therefore, the strength of the relationship between tobacco and lung cancer was diluted by the fact that tobacco was so dangerous that it was also causing many of the problems in the control groups.

Gradually, it became clear that tobacco was toxic across the spectrum of disease problems. In a logical world, rapid action would have been taken to protect people from tobacco exposure to reduce the carnage. But the tobacco problem is made up of two parts—addiction and greed.

The addiction is intense. Solutions require helping those who would like to be freed as well as erecting barriers to make it more difficult for the young to become addicted. But greed stands in the way. The tobacco companies, to ensure their personal profit, came up with increasingly clever ways of getting young people simply to try smoking. Tobacco companies made smoking seem sophisticated; they sponsored concerts. They drew an association between smoking and manly pursuits, as seen in the Marlboro Man, or feminine ideals, as with Virginia Slims. Society looked the other way. Tobacco companies knew that, if they could get young people to smoke a single pack of cigarettes, many would be their slaves for the rest of their shortened lives.

The greed went beyond the tobacco executives and extended to the politicians who received donations from the tobacco companies, representatives of tobacco growers, or both. These same politicians intimidate public health experts who give testimony against tobacco products.

Even when the country was losing more than 1,000 lives a day to tobacco, tradition stifled a logical approach. One of every five funerals was the result of tobacco. In my speeches in the 1970s, I would say, "In other parts of our society, if someone makes their money by killing someone, we call that person a 'hit man.' Why don't we put the same label on tobacco executives, who know exactly how they are making their money?"

Tradition is the answer.

In 2014, the problem remained. Smoking rates have decreased, and progress has been made, but how do we account for the fact that 400,000 Americans die each year because of tobacco? Why do public health departments continue to list the causes of death as heart disease, stroke, and cancer rather than saying the cause of death is tobacco? And how do we change a society that values greed over health? Newspapers should have a box score on the front page that keeps the tally on how many people died in that city in the past month because of tobacco. The MMWR could keep a tally on Americans lost so far this year because of tobacco, displayed in a box score on the front page of each issue.

Fifty years after the first Surgeon General's Report on tobacco, we continue to find the toll even higher than thought. In a hundred years, students will marvel at the collective blind spot involving tobacco, just as we now marvel over the blind spot this country had to slavery and as future generations will marvel at our blind spot to climate change.

## Contraception

For some, viewing contraception as unacceptable is a tradition. It originated as a decision of humans, who then enveloped the idea in a cloak of infallibility. The evidence is that many ignore the idea that contraception is unacceptable, as shown by the low birth rates in traditional Catholic countries, such as Italy and France, and the similar rates of contraceptive use in Catholic versus non-Catholic families in the Americas. But poor families

in poor countries have been slower to change their traditions. And meanwhile the population of the world has swollen, as have all of the problems resulting from excess population. The loss of rain forest in Africa, the acceleration of climate change, and the continuing problems of malnutrition, poverty, and the spread of infectious diseases, including Ebola, all result from the inability of many families to make logical decisions on family size and child spacing.

Counterintuitively, high infant death rates are compatible with the population explosion. It does not take much study to realize that the highest population growth rates are found in the countries with the highest infant and childhood death rates, while the lowest population growth rates are in the countries with the lowest infant and childhood death rates. Child health programs lead to improvements in family planning and contraception, which lead, in turn, to fewer infant deaths.

## Gun Safety

There are many reasons for violence and the epidemic of gun deaths in the United States. Logical people would want to know as much about the problem as possible in order to offer solutions. But, in 1996, an amendment by Rep. Jay Dickey (R-Arkansas) withdrew funding from the CDC to study gun violence and threatened to withdraw all injury-control funds if the CDC included gun research as part of its mandate to do no harm. The NRA uses scare tactics about the government's having a long-term plan to take guns away from people. This is sufficient to make many act on the basis of fear rather than logic.

We look back in disbelief at the irrational actions of the past, only to realize that we continue to operate with misguided tradition, rather than with rational understanding of problems and solutions.

## Medical Care

There will be a time when we will have to ask whether using the marketplace was a good way to provide medical care in this country.

The facts are that the health indices of the United States—life expectancy, infant mortality, and chronic disease burdens—are not as good as in other industrialized countries. And these, after all, are the reasons for having a health care system. It

is in place to reduce premature mortality and unnecessary suffering, not as a way to make money on illness. That should set off alarm bells that something is not working. We spend far more per person on health care than any other country and still cannot match their health outcomes. These facts should lead logical people to conclude that our system is not optimal.

Frequently, the response from politicians is, "We have the best health care system in the world, and we do not want to jeopardize it through socialized medicine." They are wrong. The United States does not even make it to the top twenty countries in the world when measuring health outcomes. It is an embarrassment to realize that about one-third of our health care expenditures do not go to health outcomes at all. They instead pay for the unneeded superstructure of insurance plans and managers that proliferate when profit, rather than quality and health outcomes, is the bottom line. Most of the twenty-plus countries with better health outcomes have single-payer systems. Our national response is that only the marketplace can improve health care delivery. If that is the case, why don't we prove it rather than just say it? A single-payer military system still allows for the use of marketplace forces to provide commodities and services. The United States continues to lead in expanding the science base of medicine. But it falls far behind other industrialized countries in improved health outcomes, coverage of the poor, and health equity.

## Poverty

The current corollary to slavery is poverty. Poverty is very inconvenient to those in its grip, but it is also a burden to society. It is the single most important determinant of health. It is not just that poor people have poor health. Various studies have shown that the healthiest societies are those with the narrowest income inequality gap. Poverty breeds discontent, and the poor often attempt through crime or social disruption to remedy the disparities. Michael Manley, formerly the prime minister of Jamaica, once said that, "Poverty shared can be endured." Modern communications have demonstrated to the poor around the world that their condition is not being shared.

Six centuries ago, Emperor Hongzhi of China said that poverty should be seen in the same light as a person drowning or a person in a burning building. He said that in both these situations there is no time

to lose, and the person must be rescued immediately.

No social determinant is as significant as poverty in causing poor health. It is not only the very poor who suffer reductions in health. Rather, every step down the income scale leads to an increase in health problems. Poverty, as a health problem, is dose related.

So poverty causes stigma and is a health hazard. But it is also similar to slavery in another regard: the poor actually subsidize the living standard for the rest of us. We get food, clothes, and lodging at a cheaper rate because people in this country and in other countries work at extremely low wages. In effect, we profit directly and indirectly from their poor standard of living in much the same way that plantation owners in the American South profited directly from the work of slaves. The embarrassment of the logic should be enough to lead to action even for those not interested in public health. But tradition salves the conscience of even the religious by repeating, "The poor will always be with us." That was a description of human foibles, not a law.

Public health workers need to focus on the effects of poverty but also on poverty itself. A living wage, rather than a minimum wage, needs to be established. No industry should be allowed to pay below that level. And the wage should be automatically indexed to inflation.

### Fatalism

A close corollary to poverty, but separate in distribution, is fatalism. More common in the poor, but not restricted to them, this is the feeling that one cannot exert control over the future. It adversely affects health because it deters people from taking positive steps to improve health in the future. Fatalism is one of the reasons so many poor people continue to smoke in the face of information that shows the hazards. The poor often do not feel that they can control their future. But empowerment can be learned. The rich and the educated lost their fatalism as they saw what education and money could do to influence their future.

I emphasize to students that we are all a mixture of fatalism and empowerment and that the ratio changes with the day and the subject. It is important to believe that this is a cause-and-effect world, not a fatalistic one.

I am most fatalistic when I enter a taxi or an airplane. I have lost control. I often tell students of my experience in getting a taxi late at night at the Philadelphia airport. I suddenly was aware of the smell of alcohol. To judge the degree of risk, I engaged the driver in conversation. I said to him, "I need to tell you that I am a high-risk passenger." He asked, "What does that mean?" I told him that I had been involved in five taxi accidents in my lifetime, a true story. His reply was, "Oh that's nothing. I have been involved in a lot more than that."

[The Girl Who Smiled Beads: A Story of War and What Comes After](#) by Clemantine Wamariya and Elizabeth Weil [Crown, 9780451495327]

[The Girl Who Smiled Beads](#) by Clemantine Wamariya and Elizabeth Weil is not the wartime memoir we've come to expect. It is a harrowing story, but it also challenges us to see those seeking refuge not just as "victims" to save or to give things to, but as people who can give things to us and expand our world. It is about the saving power of the imagination. It is about forging your own identity when the world seems determined to tell you who you are.

Clemantine Wamariya grew up in a close-knit family in Rwanda, curious and exuberant, eating pineapple cake and playing in her mother's tropical garden. She adored her nanny, Mukamana, and would beg her to tell her stories. Her favorite was about a beautiful, magical girl who

roamed the earth, leaving a trail of beads; Mukamana would begin and then invite Clemantine to imagine what came next, and how it ended. In this way, the fabled girl became a reminder that Clemantine had the power to give shape to the world—which, when Clemantine was six, came to include terrifying noises unlike any she'd ever heard, and expressions on her parents' faces she'd never seen. As neighbors began to disappear, she and her fifteen-year-old sister, Claire, were sent to stay with their grandparents in the country. One day, their grandmother ordered the two of them to run out the back door. They would run for the next six years, seeking safety in seven African countries.

Devastating yet beautiful, always uncompromising, [The Girl Who Smiled Beads](#) is Clemantine's account of her childhood and early adult life (she is now

thirty). When she was twelve, she and Claire were granted refugee status in the United States; there, in Chicago, their lives diverged. Though their bond remained unbreakable, Claire, who had for so long protected and provided for Clemantine, was a single mother cleaning hotel rooms to support her family, while Clemantine was taken in by a family who raised her as their own. She seemed—at least on the surface—to be living the American dream: attending private school, taking up cheerleading, and, ultimately, graduating from Yale. Along the way, the girls were reunited with their parents—live on the Oprah show—after twelve years apart. Yet the years of being dehumanized, of going hungry and seeing death, could not be erased. She felt at the same time both six years old and one hundred.

Clemantine refuses to allow us to make her a character out of our imaginations or a prisoner of our assumptions. "The word 'genocide' cannot tell you, cannot make you feel, the way I felt in Rwanda, the way I felt in Burundi," she says. "There's a difference between story and experience. Experience is the whole mess, all that actually happened; a story is the pieces you string together, what you make of it, a guide to your own existence. Experience is the scars on my legs. My story is that they're proof that I'm alive."

[\*The Girl Who Smiled Beads\*](#) is the profound, powerful expression of Clemantine's commitment to owning her story and constructing her life on her own terms—her voice brilliantly rendered by coauthor Elizabeth Weil. "In Mukamana's tale, the girl is truly special, undeniably strong and brave," says Clemantine. "I wanted to be my own version of that—a girl who had power and agency over her own life. The plot provided by the universe was filled with starvation, war, and rape. I would not—could not—live in that tale."

### A Conversation with Clemantine Wamariya

*In 1994, when you were six years old, you and your fifteen-year-old sister had to flee Rwanda very suddenly, carrying almost nothing. How did you get from that moment to where you are now?*

It's taken a lot of years for me to learn how to share my story. It's painful, still, for me to go back to that day. My sister and I had been sent to our grandmother's house to keep us safe because the

civil war in Rwanda had moved to a new level and soldiers were beginning to massacre people. One day there was a knock on the door and our grandmother motioned for us to run out the back toward a sweet potato field. We never saw our home again. From that point on, the world fell away and nothing made sense. Over the next six years we wandered through seven different African countries, through hunger and fear, and moments of unexpected beauty, too. My sister saved us, again and again. In 2000, when I was twelve, she got us asylum in the United States, and we started on a whole different journey.

*The title of your book comes from a story your nanny told you as a young girl. Why, of all the stories she told you, do you think that one stayed so clear in your mind through the years?*

That story was magic! When my nanny, Mukamana, told me about the girl who smiled beads, she did not just lay out the plot. She invited me to shape the tale. She set out this character, this miraculous, beautiful girl who smiled beads. Then she set that girl in the world—first in her mother's house, then walking the earth—and each step of the way Mukamana asked, "And what do you think happened next?" Whatever I said, Mukamana told me I was right. The story allowed me to believe I controlled my own destiny. It allowed me to try and make sense of a universe I could not understand. By the time I was six, the universe had turned upside down. Neighbors were disappearing, soldiers were murdering families. I understood so little. What were borders? Why did people hate us? Why did we need papers to flee war and seek peace?

The girl who smiled beads also spoke to me in a very deep way about self-worth. I so badly wanted to be that girl. Inside she had an abundance of treasure. She took it with her everywhere she went and it never ran out. The world tried so hard, for so many years, to tell me and my sister, Claire, that we were worthless. That story proved them wrong. I am a treasure to the world. My value is limitless. No one can take that away.

*As a child, what were the first signs you noticed that the world as you knew it was in jeopardy?*

I was so young at the time, so as the world imploded I noticed small things in what, for me, was

still a very small, safe world. I heard drumming in the streets. I saw expressions on my parents' faces I'd never seen before. My mother stopped going to the church and instead prayed at home. My father stopped going to work. I had a sleepover with a friend, and we traded sweaters as we were parting ways, and then I never saw her again to trade back. My mother drew the shades in our house. I asked my brother about strange noises. He told me the gunshots were thunder.

*You and Claire lived in several refugee camps—in Burundi, Tanzania, Malawi, and Mozambique. What was the day-to-day reality like for you in those situations?*

You wait in line for corn, for hours. You wait in line for water. You pick bugs out of your feet. You are in a constant battle against lice. The whole environment is constructed to strip your identity away. I tried so hard to hold onto myself. I was telling everybody—and to be honest, myself—"I'm Clemantine! I'm Clemantine! I'm Clemantine!" The only thing I was expert on when I arrived at our first camp, in Burundi, was being a well-cared-for little girl. Many of the kids in the camp walked around the naked and filthy and that threw me into a rage. I could not stand to see the flies around their eyes that nobody bothered to swat. I screamed at them, "Where is your mother? Get out of here and go tell your mother to put clothes on you." Of course, at that moment, I had no mother to clothe me myself. But I did find loving, intact people who shared their hearts and lives with me. One older couple took me into the forest beside the camp to hunt for mushrooms with them. They taught me to treat all living things, including every plant, with deep respect. One day we found a green tomato. It was spectacular! I hadn't seen a tomato in months.

*In the first chapter, you say of your sister: "I have never been Claire. I have never been inviolable." How did her response to the challenges of refugee life differ from yours? How did you make a good team, and what did you struggle over?*

Claire is the real hero of this story. She saved my life, again and again, and from the start she had this unshakable understanding that no matter how hard our lives got, no matter how thoroughly the world tried to break her down, nobody got to take her dignity. That was hers and she was never giving

it away. She always made sure she had one decent outfit: jeans and a pressed white shirt—so everywhere we went she could present herself as an equal and command not pity but respect. She was also just incredible at the hustle of our refugee life. She walked out of one camp, bought a goat, pulled it back to the camp on a rope, found a man who knew how to butcher it, gave him the goat's head for his troubles, and sold the rest of the meat. My role in our lives was pretty different. Claire had her first baby when I was eight. I was still a child myself but I took care of Claire's kids. Sometimes I felt she did not appreciate what I did for them, but now that I'm older I see that she had such an incredible burden herself finding us food and shelter.

*Soon after you arrived in the United States, you were taken in and treated like a daughter by an American family living in the Chicago suburbs. What surprised you most about their world? What were the hardest things to adjust to in the United States?*

The Thomas family showed me such unbelievable kindness. I was kind of paralyzed at first. I loved the fancy soaps in the downstairs bathrooms. I was utterly bewildered at first by Ginger, their pet dog,

because in Rwanda nobody treated dogs like people! Mrs. Thomas, in particular, was so gentle and patient with me. She taught me how to read. She made my lunches. She drove me and picked me up from school. When I arrived in the United States at age twelve I was already an adult. I became an adult the moment we ran. Mrs. Thomas allowed me to be a child again.

*You describe feeling electrified by reading Elie Wiesel's Holocaust memoir *Night* when you were in eighth grade. Why did that book mean so much to you?*

*Night* was the door that opened up the world for me. That is truly not an exaggeration. The book made me feel not crazy. It made me feel not alone. Wiesel had words to express experiences I couldn't articulate. He shared thoughts and feelings that I was too ashamed to name. Nobody had told me what happened in Rwanda and I was too young when I was there to understand the destruction of my whole world. It's an honor and a privilege to publish a book, and it's the result of so many people believing in and investing in me. If one



person can have the reading experience I had with *Night* with my book, all the pain of remembering and writing (and there was a lot!) will have been worth it. Since that time I've had so many amazing experiences with books—W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*, Maya Angelou's *Phenomenal Woman*, Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider*.

*During the time when you were moving from country to country in Africa, you had to adapt to circumstances and expectations in order to survive, and you became incredibly good at decoding what others needed and wanted from you. Now that you've been in the United States for nearly seventeen years, how do you think about your identity and situate yourself in the world around you?*

Describing myself is not one of my strengths! I used to feel so frustrated that I couldn't produce a simple description of who I am or even what I do. But I recently made peace with this. Who I am and what I'm doing depends on who I am with. As a child, I learned to adapt. I had to. And even now, I place a lot of value on place and circumstance and interpersonal exchanges. For example, I have a friend who spends most of day cleaning Chestnut Street, a very busy commercial strip near the bay in San Francisco. Every time we see each other, we stop, talk, and find something to smile about. To Calvin, I am the girl on Chestnut Street with a yoga mat who pauses to laugh and chat. I don't need to be a Yale grad or a humanitarian or a former refugee to him. It's better to just connect as two people sharing a street. Refusing to be frozen as a particular character is now a practice to me. It allows me to try to be intimate and equal with everybody.

*You write about obsessively collecting stuff—beads and other artifacts that mean something to you. What did possessions mean to you during your years of flight? What have you chosen to save over the years in the United States?*

When Claire and I were moving from country to country, without our parents, looking for safety, I collected rocks from the different places we stayed. I hoped I would see my mother again and that I could show her where I'd been. I also collected marbles for my brother, Pudi, who didn't flee with us. I kept all my stuff—my kutunda—in a Mickey Mouse backpack that I had received as a gift in Zaire. I loved that backpack. It was my

lifeline, my identity summed up in a bunch of marbles and rocks. One night we fled Malawi to go to Mozambique. During that journey I left it on a bus. I could still cry every time I think about that backpack. I went to Disneyland about fifteen years later, when I was a junior at Yale, interning at Google for the summer. In a small way, being there—seeing men and women in Mickey and Minnie suits—made me feel whole. Now, I collect almost everything—every ticket stub, every birthday card. It's really a problem. Trauma leaves you with a fractured memory. My stuff helps me hold on to and make sense of who I am.

*When you were a junior in high school, you were reunited with your parents live on the Oprah show. When you saw them walk out onto the Oprah stage, a moment you had "fantasized about...so many times," what went through your mind? How did the experience of being reunited evolve after the initial shock?*

It was completely surreal. Seeing my mother and father come through that door, it was as if they had come back from the dead. My parents also, by that point, had more children, which meant I had brand-new siblings I'd never met. I felt so much joy and so much anger. I felt like I'd been given the most beautiful hug and a kick in the gut at the same time. Time and space had robbed us of so much. We knew our parents were alive by that point but we hadn't seen them in seven years and we'd barely communicated. Right after the taping we all went into the green room to have some time alone. Nobody knew what to say. After the years apart, where do you start? Claire was frozen—not smiling, not crying, a mannequin. You can't just staple your family together again.

*When you achieved a place at an elite boarding school, and then Yale, you describe feeling energized by things you were learning but also deeply alienated. In what ways did you feel alienated by your classes and fellow students, and why?*

I am incredibly grateful for the education I've been given, but there were times, especially at Hotchkiss, when I felt so out of place. I took a philosophy seminar during which the professor asked the students to game out a scenario: "You're a ferry boat captain. The ship is sinking. How do you decide who lives and who dies?" That was not a hypothetical question to me. I've been in a boat so

overloaded with desperate humans fleeing starvation and war that people had to start throwing their luggage into the water so we didn't all sink and die. I lost it in that class and started screaming, "You have no idea, do you? You've never been in that scenario. What gives you the right to even talk? This is real. That's me—and I have a name and I'm alive and there are people out there who are dead, or they're living but they're checked out and they hate the world because people in your country sat there and watched all of us getting slaughtered."

*There's a striking passage in the book where you write: "When I'm angry, I think in Swahili because that's the language in which I learned to fully express my emotions." What Swahili words describe your emotions about publishing this book? And is there an equivalent English translation?*

Haraka haraka haina baraka. It's a bit hard to translate. Literally it means, Fast fast, there is no luck. The point is, if you're in a hurry, you'll miss out on the good stuff. Writing this book and releasing it into the world is thrilling, but there's a panic to it. I feel like I've been in pieces for months! I worked so slowly for years, on my survival, on my education, on reading and writing. And now, my goodness, it feels like such a rush. Haraka haraka haina baraka. That's my reminder to myself to try to slow down. I want to take a moment and enjoy it. This book is about so many people and the result of so many people sharing with me. If I rush, I fear I'll miss out on all I have to learn from the experience of sharing the book with the world.

*The importance of the language we use to tell our stories—as well as its limits—is a central theme in the book. For example, you write about your intense dislike of the word genocide. Why do you dislike the word so much?*

I hate the word genocide. It's so distancing and antiseptic, a performance, the worst kind of lie. It captures absolutely nothing about my experience. It tells you nothing about how it feels when you know the world wants you dead and you don't even understand what death is yet. I also truly hate the word refugee. It lumps together and flattens so many individual human lives. I am not a refugee. I sought refuge for many years, but the word refugee does not define me. It just limits me and puts me in a box.

*You write that when people hear you talk about your experience: "Some wanted to help me, and could not stand the idea that I was not defeated. Panic flashed across their faces when I suggested...that I could help them, too." What do you mean by this?*

Not everybody wants to believe they share equal humanity and equal value with a person who has been introduced to them as a refugee and genocide survivor. People want to give, which is a very nice impulse, but giving in one direction—you give to me, I do not give to you—maintains the power status quo. Sharing is very different. Sharing presumes and creates equality. To me, this is one of the most important ideas in the book. You might have time and I might have land. You might have ideas and I might have strength. You might have a tomato and I might have a knife. We need each other. We need to say: I am not better than you. You are not better than me. Nobody is better than anybody else.

*Do you talk about what happened in Rwanda with your sister or your parents?*

No. We live in the present together. My mother cooks for everybody every Sunday. We cannot talk with each other about the past, in words. We speak in actions. Someday Claire may wish to tell her own story. Right now she doesn't want to excavate the past—she wants to be with her people, support those who've walked the path she's walked, and build her life.

*What's the focus of your life moving forward?*

I am deeply committed to finding joy in my life and living in the present right now. I want to listen to people's stories and find strength in them. There is so much human-caused pain and suffering in the world. I want to honor all those difficult experiences and acknowledge their aftermath. At the same time I want to really see and love the world around me.

[Beneath a Ruthless Sun: A True Story of Violence, Race, and Justice Lost and Found by Gilbert King](#) [Riverhead, 9780399183386]

Gilbert King's [Devil in the Grove](#), winner of the 2013 Pulitzer Prize in Nonfiction, was a landmark work of investigative nonfiction. Heralded as "must-read, cannot-put-down history" (New York Times), King delivered a "powerful and well-told drama of Southern injustice" (Chicago Tribune) as he

unspooled the saga of the Groveland Four, a group of black men falsely convicted of raping a young white woman in central Florida. Praised Salon: "King recreates an important yet overlooked moment in American history with a chilling, atmospheric narrative that reads more like a Southern Gothic novel than a work of history."

The long-buried evidence uncovered by Gilbert King was shocking. His revelatory book spurred renewed interest and outrage about the racism, corruption, injustice, and violence endemic to Florida law enforcement and justice systems. At long last, this past spring the Florida House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution apologizing to the families of the Groveland Four, and the state moved to expedite the exonerations of the wrongly accused men.

King's research for *Devil in the Grove* led him further down a trail of corruption, miscarriage of justice, and secrecy in the region that [Beneath a Ruthless Sun](#), rippling with tensions over sex, race, and class reveals in longform investigative nonfiction at its absolute finest, a gripping true-crime tale that raises themes that haunt us still today: justice perverted by bigotry and the force of white privilege; wrongful incarceration; the power of the free press.

Gilbert King is among a master class of journalists delivering vital work that seeks to expose injustice and to protect and defend the innocent, alongside writers like Rebecca Skloot, Matthew Desmond, Barbara Ehrenreich, and many others. [Beneath a Ruthless Sun](#) is set to be a defining and essential publication and we look forward to your prominent coverage this spring.

### A Conversation with Gilbert King about [Beneath a Ruthless Sun](#)

*How did you discover the Okahumpka case, and what compelled you to write a book about it?*

Evvie Griffin, who had been a deputy for Sheriff Willis McCall fifty years ago, introduced himself to me while I was in Groveland, Florida for a reading of *Devil in the Grove*, and we got to talking. I clearly remember saying to him, "I'll bet you've seen some things," and he said, "You're damn right."

Evvie told me he was involved in one case that still haunted him—a case from nearby Okahumpka where they framed a mentally disabled teenager for rape and sent him off to a notoriously cruel mental institution without a trial. I had heard about the Jesse Daniels case, but mostly in whispers around Lake County. "Nobody will talk about it, even today," Evvie told me.

Once I began to get a sense of what had really happened in Okahumpka back in 1957, I knew that this was one of the most astonishing stories of injustice I've ever come across, and I could not wait to dive back into Lake County and attempt to unravel this case.

*A few of the characters in [Beneath a Ruthless Sun](#) are at the center of your 2013 Pulitzer Prize-winning book [Devil in the Grove](#). The new book also takes place in the same era and in the same region of central Florida. What keeps bringing you back to these people, and to this specific place and time?*

Initially I wasn't planning to write more about Lake County but was drawn back in after learning that both Sheriff Willis McCall—the villain in my last book — and his nemesis, the journalist Mabel Norris Reese had been heavily involved in the Jesse Daniels case. These were two of the most intriguing characters I wrote about in my previous book and I couldn't pass up the opportunity to follow their rivalry to its bitter end.

*What differentiates [Beneath a Ruthless Sun](#) from your previous book?*

Even though both books are set in Lake County, and there are a few recurring characters, the Jesse Daniels case could not be more different. In *Beneath a Ruthless Sun*, the alleged rape victim is not a poor, seventeen-year-old farm girl, but rather the wealthy, educated wife of one of the most powerful men in central Florida. Again, wealth, status, and race play major roles in the story, but never in the ways we're accustomed to. As far as death penalty cases go, and as far as I've been able to determine, the Jesse Daniels case is unprecedented with regard to race and injustice in America.

*You did an impressive amount of research for this book, including interviewing key players in the case, family members and people in the community who*

were around to witness it. Tell us about the kind of access you had to the evidence presented in the case.

The fact that I'd built so many relationships in Lake County over the past ten years made a big difference in how I was able to investigate the Okahumpka case. They knew me and trusted that I was going to get the story right, not just deliver something sensational.

One of my greatest regrets about [Devil in the Grove](#) was that the central victim, Norma Padgett, refused to talk to me or to anyone else over the past sixty years, so I had to rely on secondhand information. For *Beneath a Ruthless Sun*, I had more cooperation on every side of the story, from investigative documents and reports, to the people and families directly involved in the case. That access enriches this book on so many levels.

*There is a common thread tying several of the major white characters together in this story, and that is the fear of appearing sympathetic to African-Americans. For example, the young white deputy who exposed the corruption plaguing the Lake County Sheriffs Department, specifically concerning the Okahumpka case, refused to admit he met with NAACP officials, even though that's exactly what happened. In other words, he as a white man could not be seen as having somehow helped black people. What role does race perception play in this case, and in the book?*

If you were white and living in the Jim Crow South, being labeled as someone who supported the equal rights of African-Americans was one of the worst things that could befall you. It happened to attorneys who attempted to litigate cases according to the laws of the land. It happened to journalists who were exposing racial injustices. It happened to parents who sent their children to integrated schools.

The lengths many whites went to in order to maintain the foundation of white supremacy was not only debasing, it ruined lives—sometimes their own. Thurgood Marshall once said, "No one benefits from racism," and that quote was never more apparent to me than when I was working on this book.

*The landmark 1954 Brown vs Board of Education decision plays a significant role in both Devil in the Grove and now in BENEATH A RUTHLESS SUN.*

What impact did it have specifically on the Okahumpka case?

In order to understand how and why the Jesse Daniels case was possible, you have to understand what was happening in the South in the aftermath of Brown v. Board—the most important civil rights case of the 20th century. In many ways, the reaction to the Court's decision changed the entire political landscape of our nation. With regard to race in the South, moderate politicians suddenly disappeared. You were either for segregation or against it. Membership in the Ku Klux Klan exploded, the White Citizens Councils were born, and racial tensions were escalating in the years leading up to the civil rights movement.

*Two characters you write quite a bit about in the book are an intrepid journalist named Mabel Norris Reese and Jesse Daniels's mother, Pearl Daniels, both of whom worked tirelessly to prove Jesse's innocence. They endured ceaseless harassment, threats of physical harm (including at least one bombing attempt) and attacks on their reputations at the hands of the Lake County Sheriffs Department and the Klu Klux Klan. Tell us a bit about the role of women in this book, and why it was important to you to be able to tell Mabel and Pearl's stories specifically.*

I loved the contrast between these two women. Mabel wears pearl necklaces and designer eyeglasses and counts powerful people like Governor LeRoy Collins among her friends. Pearl on the other hand, toils in the watermelon patches of Lake County, barely making enough money to feed her family. Yet they soon become close friends because they recognize that neither would back down from the fight to exonerate Pearl's son. Both women end up resorting to the power of the pen. Mabel never stops writing stories about the injustice of Jesse's case, and Pearl writes countless letters to the governor, as well as to J. Edgar Hoover, demanding (successfully!) that the FBI open a civil rights investigation into the wrongful incarceration of her son. It is fitting that the language in the bill to exonerate Jesse Daniels specifically praised the efforts of both Mabel Norris Reese and Pearl Daniels.

*Obviously a big part of [Beneath a Ruthless Sun](#) is Jesse Daniels, the white, mentally ill teenager wrongly accused of raping Blanche Knowles. A*

*significant portion of Jesse's story takes place in the years he spent incarcerated in Florida's first and notoriously cruel mental institution, the Florida State Hospital in Chattahoochee, FL. What did Jesse's experience reveal about the standards of mental institutions in this country and the biases people with mental illness faced?*

What I didn't realize when I started this project was the extent to which mental institutes were weaponized by the criminal justice system. Jesse's incarceration came at a time in Florida's history when the state had not yet begun to recognize that there were widespread abuses throughout the system, and the rights of patients committed to Chattahoochee were virtually nonexistent. Once Jesse's case began to make headlines, the state quickly revised its nearly 100 year-old mental health laws to strengthen the protections and civil rights of mentally disabled and institutionalized patients.

[AIQ: How People and Machines Are Smarter Together](#) by Nick Poison and James Scott [St. Martin's Press, 9781250182159]

From two leading data scientists, what everyone needs to know to understand how intelligent machines are changing the world and how we can use this knowledge to make better decisions in our own lives.

Dozens of times per day, we all interact with intelligent machines that are constantly learning from the wealth of data now available to them. These machines, from smart phones to talking robots to self-driving cars, are remaking the world in the 21st century in the same way that the Industrial Revolution remade the world in the 19th century.

[AIQ](#) is based on a simple premise: if you want to understand the modern world, then you have to know a little bit of the mathematical language spoken by intelligent machines. [AIQ](#) will teach you that language—but in an unconventional way, anchored in stories rather than equations.

You will meet a fascinating cast of historical characters who have a lot to teach you about data, probability, and better thinking. Along the way, you'll see how these same ideas are playing out in the modern age of big data and intelligent machines—and how these technologies will soon

help you to overcome some of your built-in cognitive weaknesses, giving you a chance to lead a happier, healthier, more fulfilled life.

We teach data science to hundreds of students per year, and they're all fascinated by artificial intelligence. And they ask great questions. How does a car learn to drive itself? How does Alexa understand what I'm saying? How does Spotify pick such good playlists for me? How does Facebook recognize my friends in the photos I upload? These students realize that AI isn't some sci-fi droid from the future; it's right here, right now, and it's changing the world one smartphone at a time. They all want to understand it, and they all want to be a part of it.

And our students aren't the only ones enthusiastic about AI. They're joined in their exaltation by the world's largest companies—from Amazon, Facebook, and Google in America to Baidu, Tencent, and Alibaba in China. As you may have heard, these big tech firms are waging an expensive global arms race for AI talent, which they judge to be essential to their future. For years we've seen them court freshly minted PhDs with offers of \$300,000+ salaries and much better coffee than we have in academia. Now we're seeing many more companies jump into the AI recruiting fray—firms sitting on piles of data in, say, insurance or the oil business, who are coming along with whopping salary offers and fancy espresso machines of their own.

Yet while this arms race is real, we think there's a much more powerful trend at work in AI today—a trend of diffusion and dissemination, rather than concentration. Yes, every big tech company is trying to hoard math and coding talent. But at the same time, the underlying technologies and ideas behind AI are spreading with extraordinary speed: to smaller companies, to other parts of the economy, to hobbyists and coders and scientists and researchers everywhere in the world. That democratizing trend, more than anything else, is what has our students today so excited, as they contemplate a vast range of problems practically begging for good AI solutions.

Who would have thought, for example, that a bunch of undergraduates would get so excited about the mathematics of cucumbers? Well, they did when they heard about Makoto Koike, a car

engineer from Japan whose parents own a cucumber farm. Cucumbers in Japan come in a dizzying variety of sizes, shapes, colors, and degrees of prickliness—and based on these visual features, they must be separated into nine different classes that command different market prices. Koike's mother used to spend eight hours per day sorting cucumbers by hand. But then Koike realized that he could use a piece of open-source AI software from Google, called TensorFlow, to accomplish the same task, by coding up a "deep-learning" algorithm that could classify a cucumber based on a photograph. Koike had never used AI or TensorFlow before, but with all the free resources out there, he didn't find it hard to teach himself how. When a video of his AI-powered sorting machine hit YouTube, Koike became an international deep-learning/cucumber celebrity. It wasn't merely that he had given people a feel-good story, saving his mother from hours of drudgery. He'd also sent an inspiring message to students and coders across the world: that if AI can solve problems in cucumber farming, it can solve problems just about anywhere.

That message is now spreading quickly. Doctors are now using AI to diagnose and treat cancer. Electrical companies use AI to improve power-generating efficiency. Investors use it to manage financial risk. Oil companies use it to improve safety on deep-sea rigs. Law-enforcement agencies use it to hunt terrorists. Scientists use it to make new discoveries in astronomy or physics or neuroscience. Companies, researchers, and hobbyists everywhere are using AI in thousands of different ways, whether to sniff for gas leaks, mine iron, predict disease outbreaks, save honeybees from extinction, or quantify gender bias in Hollywood films. And this is just the beginning.

We see the real story of AI as the story of this diffusion: from a handful of core math concepts stretching back decades, or even centuries, to the supercomputers and talking/thinking/cucumber-sorting machines of today, to the new and ubiquitous digital wonders of tomorrow. Our goal in this book is to tell you that story. It is partly a story of technology, but it is mainly a story of ideas, and of the people behind those ideas—people from a much earlier age, people who were just keeping their heads down and solving their own problems involving math and data, and who had no

clue about the role their solutions would come to play in inventing the modern world. By the end of that story, you'll understand what AI is, where it came from, how it works, and why it matters in your life.

### What Does "AI" Really Mean?

When you hear "AI," don't think of a druid. Think of an algorithm.

An algorithm is a set of step-by-step instructions so explicit that even something as literal-minded as a computer can follow them. (You may have heard the joke about the robot who got stuck in the shower forever because of the algorithm on the shampoo bottle: "Lather. Rinse. Repeat.") On its own, an algorithm is no smarter than a power drill; it just does one thing very well, like sorting a list of numbers or searching the web for pictures of cute animals. But if you chain lots of algorithms together in a clever way, you can produce AI: a domain-specific illusion of intelligent behavior. For example, take a digital assistant like Google Home, to which you might pose a question like "Where can I find the best breakfast tacos in Austin?" This query sets off a chain reaction of algorithms:

One algorithm converts the raw sound wave into a digital signal.

Another algorithm translates that signal into a string of English phonemes, or perceptually distinct sounds: "brek-fust-tah-koze."

The next algorithm segments those phonemes into words: "breakfast tacos." Those words are sent to a search engine—itsself a huge pipeline of algorithms that processes the query and sends back an answer.

Another algorithm formats the response into a coherent English sentence.

A final algorithm verbalizes that sentence in a non-robotic-sounding way: "The best breakfast tacos in Austin are at Julio's on Duval Street. Would you like directions?"

And that's AI. Pretty much every AI system—whether it's a self-driving car, an automatic cucumber sorter, or a piece of software that monitors your credit-card account for fraud—follows this same "pipeline-of-algorithms" template. The pipeline takes in data from some specific domain, performs a chain of calculations, and outputs a prediction or a decision.

There are two distinguishing features of the algorithms used in AI. First, these algorithms typically deal with probabilities rather than certainties. An algorithm in AI, for example, won't say outright that some credit-card transaction is fraudulent. Instead, it will say that the probability of fraud is 92%—or whatever it thinks, given the data. Second, there's the question of how these algorithms "know" what instructions to follow. In traditional algorithms, like the kind that run websites or word processors, those instructions are fixed ahead of time by a programmer. In AI, however, those instructions are learned by the algorithm itself, directly from "training data." Nobody tells an AI algorithm how to classify card transactions as fraudulent or not. Instead, the algorithm sees lots of examples from each category, and it finds the patterns that distinguish one from the other. In AI, the role of the programmer isn't to tell the algorithm what to do. It's to tell the algorithm how to train itself what to do, using data and the rules of probability.

### How Did We Get Here?

Modern AI systems, like a self-driving car or a home digital assistant, are pretty new on the scene. But you might be surprised to learn that most of the big ideas in AI are actually old—in many cases, centuries old—and that our ancestors have been using them to solve problems for generations. For example, take self-driving cars. Google debuted its first such car in 2009. But you'll learn in chapter 3 that one of the main ideas behind how these cars work was discovered by a Presbyterian minister in the 1750s—and that this idea was used by a team of mathematicians over 50 years ago to solve one of the Cold War's biggest blockbuster mysteries.

Or take image classification, like the software that automatically tags your friends in Facebook photos. Algorithms for image processing have gotten radically better over the last five years. But in chapter 2, you'll learn that the key ideas here date to 1805—and that these ideas were used a century ago, by a little-known astronomer named Henrietta Leavitt, to help answer one of the deepest scientific questions that humans have ever posed: How big is the universe?

Or even take speech recognition, one of the great AI triumphs of recent years. Digital assistants like Alexa and Google Home are remarkably fluent with language, and they'll only get better. But the

first person to get a computer to understand English was a rear admiral in the U.S. Navy, and she did so almost 70 years ago.

Those are just three illustrations of a striking fact: no matter where you look in AI, you'll find an idea that people have been kicking around for a long time. So in many ways, the big historical puzzle isn't why AI is happening now, but why it didn't happen long ago. To explain this puzzle, we must look to three enabling technological forces that have brought these venerable ideas into a new age.

The first AI enabler is the decades-long exponential growth in the speed of computers, usually known as Moore's law. It's hard to convey intuitively just how fast computers have gotten. The cliché used to be that the Apollo astronauts landed on the moon with less computing power than a pocket calculator. But this no longer resonates, because ... what's a pocket calculator? So we'll try a car analogy instead. In 1951, one of the fastest computers was the UNIVAC, which performed 2,000 calculations per second, while one of the fastest cars was the Alfa Romeo 6C, which traveled 110 miles per hour. Both cars and computers have improved since 1951—but if cars had improved at the same rate as computers, then a modern Alfa Romeo would travel at 8 million times the speed of light.

The second AI enabler is the new Moore's law: the explosive growth in the amount of data available, as all of humanity's information has become digitized. The Library of Congress consumes 10 terabytes of storage, but in 2013 alone, the big four tech firms—Google, Apple, Facebook, and Amazon—collected about 120,000 times as much data as this. And that's a lifetime ago in internet years. The pace of data accumulation is accelerating faster than an Apollo rocket; in 2017, more than 300 hours of video were uploaded to YouTube every minute, and more than 100 million images were posted to Instagram every day. More data means smarter algorithms.

The third AI enabler is cloud computing. This trend is nearly invisible to consumers, but it's had an enormous democratizing effect on AI. To illustrate this, we'll draw an analogy here between data and oil. Imagine if all companies of the early twentieth century had owned some oil, but they had to build the infrastructure to extract, transport, and refine



that oil on their own. Any company with a new idea for making good use of its oil would have faced enormous fixed costs just to get started; as a result, most of the oil would have sat in the ground. Well, the same logic holds for data, the oil of the twenty-first century. Most hobbyists or small companies would face prohibitive costs if they had to buy all the gear and expertise needed to build an AI system from their data. But the cloud-computing resources provided by outfits like Microsoft Azure, IBM, or Amazon Web Services have turned that fixed cost into a variable cost, radically changing the economic calculus for large-scale data storage and analysis. Today, anyone that wants to make use of their "oil" can now do so cheaply, by renting someone else's infrastructure.

When you put those four trends together—faster chips, massive data sets, cloud computing, but above all good ideas—you get a supernova-like explosion in both the demand and capacity for using AI to solve real problems.

### AI Anxieties

We've told you how excited our students are about AI, and how the world's largest firms are rushing to embrace it. But we'd be lying if we said that everyone was so bullish about these new technologies. In fact, many people are anxious, whether about jobs, data privacy, wealth concentration, or Russians with fake-news Twitter-bots. Some people—most famously Elon Musk, the tech entrepreneur behind Tesla and SpaceX—paint an even scarier picture: one where robots become self-aware, decide they don't like being ruled by people, and start ruling us with a silicon fist.

Let's talk about Musk's worry first; his views have gotten a lot of attention, presumably because people take notice when a member of the billionaire disrupter class talks about artificial intelligence. Musk has claimed that in developing AI technology, humanity is "summoning a demon," and that smart machines are "our biggest existential threat" as a species.

After you've read our book, you'll be able to decide for yourself whether you think these worries are credible. We want to warn you up front, however, that it's very easy to fall into a trap that cognitive scientists call the "availability heuristic": the mental shortcut in which people evaluate the plausibility of a claim by relying on whatever

immediate examples happen to pop into their minds. In the case of AI, those examples are mostly from science fiction, and they're mostly evil—from the Terminator to the Borg to HAL 9000. We think that these sci-fi examples have a strong anchoring effect that makes many people view the "evil AI" narrative less skeptically than they should. After all, just because we can dream it and make a film about it doesn't mean we can build it. Nobody today has any idea how to create a robot with general intelligence, in the manner of a human or a Terminator. Maybe your remote descendants will figure it out; maybe they'll even program their creation to terrorize the remote descendants of Elon Musk. But that will be their choice and their problem, because no option on the table today even remotely foreordains such a possibility. Now, and for the foreseeable future, "smart" machines are smart only in their specific domains:

- Alexa can read you a recipe for spaghetti Bolognese, but she can't chop the onions, and she certainly can't turn on you with a kitchen knife.
- An autonomous car can drive you to the soccer field, but it can't even referee the match, much less decide on its own to tie you to the goalposts and kick the ball at your sensitive bits.

Moreover, consider the opportunity cost of worrying that we'll soon be conquered by self-aware robots. To focus on this possibility now is analogous to the de Havilland Aircraft Company, having flown the first commercial jetliner in 1952, worrying about the implications of warp speed travel to distant galaxies. Maybe one day, but right now there are far more important things to worry about—like, to press the jetliner analogy a little further, setting smart policy for all those planes in the air today.

This issue of policy brings us to a whole other set of anxieties about AI, much more plausible and immediate. Will AI create a jobless world? Will machines make important decisions about your life, with zero accountability? Will the people who own the smartest robots end up owning the future?

These questions are deeply important, and we hear them discussed all the time—at tech conferences, in the pages of the world's major newspapers, and over lunch among our colleagues. We should let

you know up front that you won't find the answers to these questions in our book, because we don't know them. Like our students, we are ultimately optimistic about the future of AI, and we hope that by the end of the book, you will share that optimism. But we're not labor economists, policy experts, or soothsayers. We're data scientists—and we're also academics, meaning that our instinct is to stay firmly in our lane, where we're confident of our expertise. We can teach you about AI, but we can't tell you for sure what the future will bring.

We can tell you, however, that we've encountered a common set of narratives that people use to frame this subject, and we find them all incomplete. These narratives emphasize the wealth and power of the big tech firms, but they overlook the incredible democratization and diffusion of AI that's already happening. They highlight the dangers of machines making important decisions using biased data, but they fail to acknowledge the biases or outright malice in human decision-making that we've been living with forever. Above all, they focus intensely on what machines may take away, but they lose sight of what we'll get in return: different and better jobs, new conveniences, freedom from drudgery, safer workplaces, better health care, fewer language barriers, new tools for learning and decision-making that will help us all be smarter, better people.

Take the issue of jobs. In America, jobless claims kept hitting new lows from 2010 through 2017, even as AI and automation gained steam as economic forces. The pace of robotic automation has been even more relentless in China, yet wages there have been soaring for years. That doesn't mean AI hasn't threatened individual people's jobs. It has, and it will continue to do so, just as the power loom threatened the jobs of weavers, and just as the car threatened the jobs of buggy whips. New technologies always change the mix of labor needed in the economy, putting downward pressure on wages in some areas and upward pressure in others. AI will be no different, and we strongly support job-training and social-welfare programs to provide meaningful help for those displaced by technology. A universal basic income might even be the answer here, as many Silicon Valley bosses seem to think; we don't claim to know. But arguments that AI will create a jobless

future are, so far, completely unsupported by actual evidence.

Then there's the issue of market dominance. Amazon, Google, Facebook, and Apple are enormous companies with tremendous power. It is critical that we be vigilant in the face of that power, so that it isn't used to stifle competition or erode democratic norms. But don't forget that these companies are successful because they have built products and services that people love. And they'll only continue to be successful if they keep innovating, which isn't easy for large organizations. Besides, we've read a lot of predictions that the big tech firms of today will remain dominant forever, and we find that these predictions usually don't even explain the past, much less the future. Remember when Dell and Microsoft were dominant in computing? Or when Nokia and Motorola were dominant in cell phones—so dominant that it was hard to imagine otherwise? Remember when every lawyer had a BlackBerry, when every band was on Myspace, or when every server was from Sun Microsystems? Remember AOL, Blockbuster Video, Yahoo!, Kodak, or the Sony Walkman? Companies come and companies go, but time marches on, and the gadgets just keep getting cooler.

We take a practical outlook on the emergence of AI: it is here today, and more of it is coming tomorrow, whether any of us like it or not. These technologies will bring immense benefits, but they will also, inevitably, reflect our weak spots as a civilization. As a result, there will be dangers to watch out for, whether to privacy, to equality, to existing institutions, or to something nobody's even thought of yet. We must meet these dangers with smart policy—and if we hope to craft smart policy in a world of "hot takes" and 140 characters, it is essential that we reach a point as a society where we can discuss these issues in a balanced way, one that reflects both their importance and their complexity. Our book isn't going to present that discussion. But it will show you what you need to understand if you want to play an informed role in that discussion.

[Elastic: Flexible Thinking in a Time of Change](#) by Leonard Mlodinow [Pantheon, 9781101870921]

From the best-selling author of [Subliminal](#) and [The Drunkard's Walk](#) comes a groundbreaking look at the psychology and neuroscience of change, and at

how tapping into elastic thinking will help us thrive in the modern world.

Drawing on cutting-edge research, Leonard Mlodinow takes us on an illuminating journey through the mechanics of our minds as we navigate the rapidly changing landscapes around us. Out of the exploratory instincts that allowed our ancestors to prosper hundreds of thousands of years ago, humans developed a cognitive style that Mlodinow terms elastic thinking, a unique set of talents that include neophilia (an affinity for novelty), schizotypy (a tendency toward unusual perception), imagination and idea generation, and divergent and integrative thinking. These are the qualities that enabled innovators from Mary Shelley to Miles Davis, from the inventor of jumbo-sized popcorn to the creators of *Pokémon Go*, to effect paradigm shifts in our culture and society. In our age of unprecedented technological innovation and social change, it is more important than ever to encourage these abilities and traits.

How can we train our brains to be more comfortable when confronting change and more adept at innovation? How do our brains generate new ideas, and how can we nurture that process? Why can diversity and even discord be beneficial to our thought process? With his keen acumen and quick wit, Leonard Mlodinow gives us the essential tools to harness the power of elastic thinking in an endlessly dynamic world.

### Excerpt: The Demands of Change

On July 6, 2016, Niantic, a forty-person startup company founded by ex-employees of Google's "Geo" division, launched *Pokémon Go*, an "augmented reality" game that employs a phone's camera to let people capture virtual creatures that appear on their screens as if they exist in the real world. Within two days the app had been installed on more than 10 percent of all Android phones in the United States, and within two weeks it had thirty million users. Soon iPhone owners were spending more time each day on *Pokémon Go* than on Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, or Twitter. Even more impressive, within days of the game's release, the words *Pokémon Go* drew more searches on Google than the word porn.

If you're not a gamer, you might roll your eyes or shrug at all that, but in the business world, the events were hard to ignore: The game generated

an astonishing \$1.6 million in revenue each day from domestic Apple users alone. Just as important, it added \$7.5 billion to Niantic's market value virtually overnight, and within a month it had doubled the stock price of Nintendo, the company that owns the *Pokémon* trademark.

In its first six months of existence, more than six hundred million people downloaded the *Pokémon Go* app. Contrast that with some of the greatest successes of the early 2000s. Facebook launched in 2004, but it didn't hit the thirty-million-user mark until 2007. The hugely popular *World of Warcraft* game, also released in 2004, took six years to climb to its peak of twelve million subscribers. What seemed like pedal-to-the-metal growth back then became, ten years later, life in the slow lane. And though no one can predict what the next big new thing will be, most economists and sociologists expect that society will only continue to morph faster in the foreseeable future.

But to focus only on the speed of *Pokémon Go*'s ascent is to miss much of the point. The game's massive success might not have been predictable, but neither was it accidental. In creating the app, Niantic made a series of innovative and forward-thinking decisions concerning the use of technology, such as piggybacking on the GPS and camera capabilities of a cell phone and leveraging cloud computing to power the app, which provided a built-in infrastructure and a capacity to scale. The game also took advantage, like nothing before it, of app-store economics, a business model that hadn't even been invented when *World of Warcraft* launched. In that now familiar approach, a game is given away free of charge and makes its money by selling addons and upgrades. Maintaining that revenue stream was another challenge. In the interactive entertainment industry, a game can start out popular and still have the shelf life of raw oysters. To avoid that fate, Niantic surprised many with a long campaign to aggressively update the app with meaningful features and content. As a result, a year after its launch, 65 million people were still playing the game each month, and revenues had reached \$1.2 billion.

Before *Pokémon Go*, the conventional wisdom was that people didn't want a game that required physical activity and real-world interaction. And so, despite all the innovation in Silicon Valley, the

Pokémon Go developers were often admonished that gamers just "want to sit and play." But the developers ignored that widely held assumption, and by leveraging existing technologies in a novel way, they changed the way game developers think. The flip side of the Pokémon Go story is that if your thinking is not deft, your company can quickly sink. Just look at BlackBerry, Blockbuster, Borders, Dell, Eastman Kodak, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Sun Microsystems, Sears, and Yahoo. And they are just the tip of the iceberg—in 1958, the average life span of companies in the S&P 500 was sixty-one years. Today it is about twenty.

We have to face analogous intellectual challenges in our daily lives. Today we consume, on average, a staggering 100,000 words of new information each day from various media—the equivalent of a three-hundred-page book. That's compared with about 28,000 a few decades ago. Due to innovative new products and technologies, and to that proliferation of information, accomplishing what was once a relatively straightforward task can now be a bewilderingly complex journey through a jungle of possibilities.

Not long ago, if we wanted to take a trip, we'd check out a guidebook or two, get AAA maps, and call the airline and hotels, or we'd talk to one of this country's eighteen thousand travel agents. Today, people use, on average, twenty-six websites when planning a vacation, and must weigh an avalanche of offers and alternatives, with prices that not only change as a function of when in the day you wish to travel but also as a function of when you are looking. Simply finalizing the purchase once you've decided has become a kind of duel between business and customer, with each vying for the best deal, from his or her vantage point. If you didn't need a vacation when you started planning one, you might by the time you are done.

Today, as individuals, we have great power at our fingertips, but we must also routinely solve problems that we didn't have to face ten or twenty years ago. For instance, once, while my wife and I were out of the country, my daughter Olivia, then fifteen, gave the house sitter the night off. Olivia then texted us asking if she could invite "a few" friends over. "A few" turned out to be 363—thanks to the instant invitations that can be communicated over cell phones on Instagram. As it turned out, she

wasn't entirely to blame—it was an overzealous friend who posted it—but it's a calamity that wouldn't have been possible when her brothers were that age, just a handful of years earlier.

In a society in which even basic functions are being transformed, the challenges can be daunting. Today many of us must invent new structures for our personal lives that account for the fact that digital technology makes us constantly available to our employers. We must discover ways to dodge increasingly sophisticated attempts at cybercrime or identity theft. We have to manage ever-dwindling "free" time so that we can interact with friends and family, read, exercise, or just relax. We must learn to troubleshoot problems with home software, phones, and computers. Everywhere we turn, and every day, we are faced with circumstances and issues that would not have confronted us just a decade or two ago.

Much has been written about that accelerating pace of change and the globalization and rapid technological innovation that have fueled it. This book is about what is not so often discussed: the new demands on how we must think in order to thrive in this whirlwind era—for as rapid change transforms our business, professional, political, and personal environments, our success and happiness depend on our coming to terms with it.

There are certain talents that can help us, qualities of thought that have always been useful but are now becoming essential. For example: the capacity to let go of comfortable ideas and become accustomed to ambiguity and contradiction; the capability to rise above conventional mind-sets and to reframe the questions we ask; the ability to abandon our ingrained assumptions and open ourselves to new paradigms; the propensity to rely on imagination as much as on logic and to generate and integrate a wide variety of ideas; and the willingness to experiment and be tolerant of failure. That's a diverse bouquet of talents, but as psychologists and neuroscientists have elucidated the brain processes behind them, those talents have been revealed as different aspects of a coherent cognitive style. I call it elastic thinking.

Elastic thinking is what endows us with the ability to solve novel problems and to overcome the neural and psychological barriers that can impede us from looking beyond the existing order. In the coming

pages, we will examine the great strides scientists have recently made in understanding how our brains produce elastic thinking, and how we can nurture it.

In that large body of research one quality stands out above all the others—unlike analytical reasoning, elastic thinking arises from what scientists call "bottom-up" processes. A brain can do mental calculations the way a computer does, from the top down, with the brain's high-level executive structures dictating the approach. But, due to its unique architecture, a biological brain can also perform calculations from the bottom up. In the bottom-up mode of processing, individual neurons fire in complex fashion without direction from an executive, and with valuable input from the brain's emotional centers (as we'll be discussing). That kind of processing is nonlinear and can produce ideas that seem far afield, and that would not have arisen in the step-by-step progression of analytical thinking.

Though no computer and few animals excel at elastic thinking, that ability is built into the human brain. That's why the creators of Pokémon Go were able to quiet the executive functions of their brains, look beyond the "obvious," and explore entirely new avenues. The more we understand elastic thinking and the bottom-up mechanisms through which our mind produces it, the better we can all learn to harness it to face challenges in our personal lives and our work environments. The purpose of this book is to examine those mental processes, the psychological factors that affect them, and, most important of all, the practical strategies that can help us master them.

### Rising Above the Nematode

Every animal has a toolbox for handling the circumstances of daily life, with some capacity to confront change. Take the lowly nematode, or roundworm (*C. elegans*), one of the most primitive biological information-processing systems we know. The nematode either solves its problems of existence by employing a neural network composed of a mere 302 neurons, with only five thousand chemical synapses between them, or it perishes.

Perhaps the most critical challenge the nematode experiences arises when its environment runs out of the microbes it feeds on. Upon recognizing that

circumstance, what does this biological computer do?

It crawls into the gut of a slug, waiting to be pooped out the next day in a different location. Not a very glamorous life. To us, the plan may sound both brilliant and disgusting, but in the roundworm's world it is neither, for the few hundred neurons in its nervous system are incapable of either complex problem-solving or sophisticated emotions. To hitchhike in slug excrement is not a desperate creation of the nematode's mind. It is an evolutionary response to deprivation that is hardwired into each individual, because the depletion of food is an environmental circumstance that such organisms face regularly.

Even among more complex animals, much of an organism's behavior is "scripted," by which I mean it is preprogrammed or automatic, and initiated by some trigger in the environment. Consider the brooding goose, with her sophisticated brain, sitting on her nest. When she notices that an egg has fallen out, she fixates on the stray egg, raises herself, and extends her neck and bill to gently roll the egg back into her nest. Those actions appear to be the product of a thoughtful and caring mother, but, like the nematode's, they are simply the product of a script.

Scripted behavior is one of nature's shortcuts, a reliable coping mechanism that leads to results that are usually successful. It can be either innate or the result of habit, and it is often related to mating, nesting, and killing prey. But—what is most important—while scripted behavior can be appropriate in routine situations, it produces a fixed response, and so it often fails in circumstances of novelty or change.

Suppose, for example, that as the goose begins to extend her neck, the stray egg is removed. Will she adapt and abort her plan of action? No, she will continue as if the egg were still there. Like a mime, she will nudge the now imaginary egg back toward her nest. What's more, she can also be induced to perform her egg rolling on any roundish object, such as a beer can or a baseball. In the wisdom of evolution, it was apparently more efficient to endow the mother goose with an automatic behavior that is almost always appropriate than to leave the egg-saving action to some more complex but nuanced mental process.

Humans follow scripts, too. I like to think that I give more thought to my actions than the average mother goose. Yet I've found myself, when passing the snack cabinet, grabbing a handful of almonds without pondering whether, at that moment, I really wanted a snack. When my daughter asks if she can stay home from school because she feels a cold "coming on," I may respond with an automatic "No" instead of taking the request seriously and asking for specifics. And I've found myself, while driving to a familiar place, following my familiar route without making a conscious decision to do so.

Scripts are useful shortcuts, but for most animals it would be difficult to survive by employing preprogrammed scripts alone. After recognizing her prey from a distance, for example, a hunting female lion must carefully stalk her quarry. The environment, the conditions, and the actions of her prey can vary considerably. As a result, no fixed script inscribed in her nervous system will be adequate to meet the demands of finding food. Instead, the lion must have the ability to evaluate a situation in the context of a goal and to formulate a plan of action aimed at achieving that goal.

It is for those situations in which scripted modes of information processing do not serve an individual well that evolution has provided the two other means through which we and other animals can calculate a response. One is rational/logical/analytical thought, which, for simplicity, I will simply call analytical thought—a step-by-step approach through which an organism moves from one related thought to another based on facts or reason. The other is elastic thinking. Different species possess these in differing degrees, but they are thought to be most developed in mammals, especially in primates; and among primates, especially in humans.

Analytical thought is the form of reflection that has been most prized in modern society. Best suited to analyzing life's more straight-forward issues, it is the kind of thinking we focus on in our schools.

We quantify our ability in it through IQ tests and college entrance examinations, and we seek it in our employees. But although analytical thinking is powerful, like scripted processing it proceeds in a linear fashion. Governed by our conscious mind, in analytical thinking, thoughts and ideas come in sequence, from A to B to C, each following its

predecessor according to a fixed set of rules—the rules of logic, as might be executed on a computer. As a result, analytical reasoning, like scripted processing, often fails to meet the challenges of novelty and change.

It is in meeting those challenges that elastic thinking excels. The process of elastic thought cannot be traced in an A to B to C fashion. Instead, proceeding largely in the unconscious, elastic thinking is a nonlinear mode of processing in which multiple threads of thought may be pursued in parallel. Conclusions are reached from the bottom up through the minute interactions of billions of networked neurons in a process too complex to be detailed step by step. Lacking the strict top-down direction of analytical thought, and being more emotion-driven, elastic thinking is tailored to integrating diverse information, solving riddles, and finding new approaches to challenging problems. It also allows the consideration of ideas that are unusual or even bizarre, fueling our creativity (which also requires analytical thinking so that we may understand and explore those new ideas).

Our elastic thinking skills evolved hundreds of thousands of years ago so that we could beat the odds presented by living in the wild. We needed those skills because, as primates go, we aren't the toughest physical specimens. Our close relative the bonobo can jump twice as high. The chimpanzee has, pound for pound, twice the arm strength. A gorilla might find a sharp-angled boulder, have a seat, and survey its surroundings; humans sit on posh chairs and wear glasses. And if it's the wrong chair, we complain about a backache. Our ancestors were no doubt tougher than we are today, but what saved us from extinction was our elastic thinking, which gave us the ability to overcome challenges through social cooperation and innovation.

In the past 12,000 years, we humans have settled into societies that are somewhat protected from the dangers of the wild. Over those many millennia, we've turned our powers of elastic thinking toward improving or enhancing our everyday existence. Robins' nests don't have bathrooms, and squirrels don't store their acorns in safes. But we humans live in an environment built almost entirely on our own imagination. We don't just live in generic huts; we have homes and apartments of all designs and sizes, and we decorate them with works of art. We

don't just walk or run; we bicycle, drive cars, travel in boats, and fly in airplanes (not to mention scooting along on Razors, Segways, and hoverboards). Each of these modes of travel, at one time, did not exist. They were each, at conception, a never-before-imagined solution to some perceived problem. As were the eraser and paper clips on your desk, the shoes on your feet, and the toothbrush in your bathroom.

Wherever we go, we swim among the products of the elastic human mind. But though elastic thinking is not a new talent for the human species, the demands of this moment in history have thrust it from background to foreground and made it a critical aptitude in even the routine matters of our everyday professional and personal lives. No longer the special tool of people such as scientific problem solvers, inventors, and artists, a talent for elastic thinking is now an important factor in anyone's ability to thrive.

## Onward

Psychologists and neuroscientists are only now working out the science of elastic thinking. They have discovered that the brain function that produces bottom-up elastic thinking is quite different from that which generates top-down analytical thinking. That science rests on recent advances in the study of the brain that have recast our understanding of many of its unique and distinct neural networks. For example, in 2016, the NIH's Human Connectome Project, employing revolutionary new high-resolution imaging techniques and cutting-edge computer technology, showed that the brain has far more substructures than anyone had previously believed. One important structure, the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, was discovered to actually consist of a dozen distinct smaller elements. In all, the project identified ninety-seven new brain regions, differentiated by both structure and function. The lessons of the Connectome project have opened new vistas, and have been compared to the discovery in physics that atoms are made up of smaller particles—protons, neutrons, and electrons. In the chapters ahead, I will make use of such cutting-edge neuroscience and psychology to explore how elastic thinking arises in the brain. Once we understand these bottom-up thought processes, we will learn ways of implementing, manipulating, controlling, and nurturing them.

Part I of *Elastic* is about how we must adapt our thinking to change, and why our brains are good at it. In part II, I examine how humans (and other animals) take in information and process it so that they can innovate to meet the challenges of novelty and change. Part III is about how the brain attacks problems and generates new ideas and solutions, and part IV is about the barriers that can stand in the way of elastic thinking and how we can overcome them.

Along the way, I will examine the psychological factors that are important in elastic thinking and how they manifest in our lives. These include personality traits such as neophilia (the degree of affinity for novelty) and schizotypy (a cluster of characteristics that include a tendency to have unusual ideas and magical beliefs). They also include abilities such as pattern recognition, idea generation, divergent thinking (being able to think of many diverse ideas), fluency (being able to quickly generate ideas), imagination (being able to conceive of what does not exist), and integrative thinking (the ability to hold in mind, balance, and reconcile diverse or opposing ideas). Research on the brain's role in these traits constitutes one of the hottest new directions in both psychology and neuroscience.

How do our minds respond to the demands of novelty and change? How do we create new concepts and paradigms, and how can we cultivate that ability? What keeps us tied to the old ideas? How can we become flexible in the way we frame questions and issues? We are fortunate that today the enormous mountain of new scientific knowledge about how the bottom-up mind works makes it possible to answer such questions. As I unpack the science of the bottom-up thought mechanisms behind elastic thinking, I hope to change the way you view your own thought processes, and to provide insight into how we think—and how we can think better—so that we can succeed in a world in which an ability to adapt is more crucial than ever before.

[City of the Good: Nature, Religion, and the Ancient Search for What Is Right](#) by Michael Mayerfield Bell [Princeton University Press, 9780691165097]

How we came to seek absolute good in religion and nature—and why that quest often leads us astray



People have long looked to nature and the divine as paths to the good. In this panoramic meditation on the harmonious life, Michael Mayerfeld Bell traces how these two paths came to be seen as separate from human ways, and how many of today's conflicts can be traced back thousands of years to this ancient divide.

Taking readers on a spellbinding journey through history and across the globe, Bell begins with the pagan view, which sees nature and the divine as entangled with the human—and not necessarily good. But the emergence of urban societies gave rise to new moral concerns about the political character of human life. Wealth and inequality grew, and urban people sought to justify their passions. In the face of such concerns, nature and the divine came to be partitioned from the human, and therefore seen to be good—but they also became absolute and divisive.

Bell charts the unfolding of this new moral imagination in the rise of Buddhism, Christianity, Daoism, Hinduism, Jainism, and many other traditions that emerged with bourgeois life. He follows developments in moral thought, from the religions of the ancient Sumerians, Greeks, and Hebrews to the science and environmentalism of today, along the way visiting with contemporary indigenous people in South Africa, Costa Rica, and the United States. [City of the Good](#) urges us to embrace the plurality of our traditions—from the pagan to the bourgeois—and to guard against absolutism and remain open to difference and its endless creativity.

### The Conundrum of the Absolute

Early one morning in the New England autumn, a lonely man took a walk in the woods. He headed west as he walked, drawn by, as he later put it, a "subtile [sic] magnetism." He walked alone, at least alone of other humans. He found company with the trees and the scurry of wildlife shuffling through the foliage, occasionally pausing to note the passing bearded figure. Such companions do not contradict your mood, your ideas, your plans. Their lives move to other concerns. So it was peaceful. But the east rumbled with tumult, conflict, and confusion. For to the east lay the bellowing city: Boston.

It was a contentious time, even more than ours is today. The Abolition Movement was growing in strength and controversy. By the time the lonely

man's essay about his walk appeared in print in 1862, the American Civil War had begun. How should we live? What is just? What is sacred? What is true? How can we best steward the world and care for all its inhabitants, human and nonhuman alike? People found themselves so divided that they were willing to kill each other to settle these questions. The "more perfect union" promised in the US Constitution had never seemed so elusive and unlikely. Eleven states had seceded from the Union. The battles were bloody, some of the bloodiest ever seen—especially the September 17, 1862, Battle of Antietam, where twenty-three thousand soldiers died on a single day, each killed by someone who a few years prior had considered himself a fellow citizen. Bloody as they were, the battles remained inconclusive, and more awful fighting seemed certain to follow.

In the face of such contention, of social life turned to horror, there was much to be said for the lonely life apart from society. As this hardy walker put it, "I wish to speak a word for Nature, for absolute Freedom and Wildness, as contrasted with a Freedom and Culture merely civil,—to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society." Here we might learn that "we have a wild savage in us" and that "a savage name is perchance somewhere recorded as ours." Here one might escape "Man and his affairs, church and state—and school, trade and commerce, and manufactures and agriculture,—even politics, the most alarming of them all." Here one might find a "portion of the earth's surface where a man does not stand from one year's end to another and there consequently politics are not, for they are but as the cigar smoke of a man."

The 1850s and early 1860s were also a time of bounding scientific and technological discovery. Henry Bessemer patented a means to mass produce steel in 1855. The world's first oil refinery came on line in 1856. In 1859, Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*, and digging began for the Suez Canal. Henry Gatling patented the Gatling gun, generally regarded as the first workable machine gun, in 1861. The first section of the London Underground opened in 1863. Factories grew in size and output, changing the clothes people wore, the food they ate, the homes they lived in, and the techniques of daily living they used to accomplish their myriad mundane needs. Humans dominated

the natural world as never before, bending it to their wishes, and sometimes bending it out of recognition.

These advances were not unmixed blessings, at least in the mind of the lonely walker, ever turning west. "Now a days, almost all man's improvements, so called, as the building of homes, and the cutting down of the forest, and of all large trees, simply deform the landscape, and make it more and more tame and cheap" Yes, the science and industry of the east enabled welcome comforts. But we were losing as much as we gained. As he put it, "We have heard of a Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. It is said that Knowledge is power; and the like. Methinks there is equal need of a Society for the Diffusion of Useful Ignorance, what we will call Beautiful Knowledge, a knowledge useful in a higher sense" For "a man's ignorance sometimes is not only useful, but beautiful, while his knowledge, so called, is oftentimes worse than useless beside being ugly" Which is why the lonely man found that "Eastward I go only by force; but westward I go free." As he put it in his most famous of many famous lines: "The West of which I speak is but another name for the Wild; and what I have been preparing to say is, that in Wildness is the preservation of the world:"

We are not all like Henry David Thoreau, lonely walkers through the woods of the world, turning ever outward to find the ever inward. But ideas that resonate with Thoreau's sensibilities continue to resound through the thoughts and social debates that most of us moderns today find ourselves caught up in. ("Moderns" is not a perfect word to describe the "us" I have in mind, and our origins, but it will do for the present.) Like Thoreau, most of us are deeply concerned about human domination of ecology. Like Thoreau, most of us are deeply concerned about human domination of each other. We often seek in nature a basis for living more lightly and more justly, a basis for the good.

And whether we search for the good in the lonely woods or not, we moderns all find ourselves doing some walking, looking for paths that take us beyond the conflicts of human communities—for absolutes that give us a sense of respite from the smoky vapors of our ceaseless politics.

It's an old problem. In 387 CE, one man sought his respite in a quiet garden in Mediolanum—the city

we today call Milan—the western capital of a splintering Roman Empire. He was a confused man in a confused time. "Thither my inner turmoil carried me," he later described, "where no one could interfere with my deep conflagration." The confused man was accompanied only by a close friend, "loyal at my side." And he carried a copy of the letters of the Apostle Paul, bound together into a book, a new means of assembling writing that was fast replacing the scroll.

He had much on his mind—not least his ambitious mother, who had followed him to Mediolanum from their hometown in Numidia, a Roman province in North Africa. Her goal was to straighten him out. She strongly disapproved of his fifteen-year-long relationship with a concubine he had met as a young man in Carthage, and of his lack of a proper wife. Plus his mother was a devout Christian. She had long been disturbed by the confused man's commitment to Manichaeism, a religion started a hundred years earlier by a Persian sage named Mani. Manichaeism revered the teachings of Jesus, but also those of Zoroaster and the Buddha, seeing them all as divine windows into the same goodness that Mani called simply "light" in the face of the evil forces of the "dark." The confused man had come to question Manichaeism. The more he considered it, the more simplistic he found it. He had been having many deep conversations with Ambrose, the Christian bishop of Mediolanum. But he had not committed to Christianity. Not yet.

His mother could not deny that he was doing well, though. Although only thirty-two, the confused man held the position of professor of rhetoric in Mediolanum. He could count hundreds of adoring students, and dozens of influential friends, such as Ambrose. He had written a book on aesthetics. But his mother hoped for more, maybe even the governorship of a province like Numidia.

The confused man was certainly plenty ambitious. But did he really want a governorship—especially if it was his mother's idea? In any case, for a governorship he would need a real wife, one from a wealthy family with the money and status to promote his career. His mother convinced him to send the concubine packing, back to Africa. She arranged for a marriage with a girl with the necessary pedigree. But the girl was only eleven. The confused man would have to wait two more years until she came of age. Plus he didn't love her,

and he very much loved the concubine. "My heart, to which she had been grafted, was lacerated, wounded, shedding blood," he wrote concerning his mistress's departure.

Many found the times confusing, not just this man in the garden with his friend and a book. As Thoreau's day would later also experience, a civil war raged, one with a long and complex history. A century before, the Roman Empire had split into two, then into four, with four capitals, one of which was Mediolanum—all in addition to Rome, which still held much traditional power, although none of the four emperors lived there. (In a way, there were five capitals.) Eventually, the powerful figure of Constantine pulled the empire back together into one brute being. That didn't last long, though. On his death, Constantine's three sons split the empire into three dominions, one for each. They then promptly set about attacking each other until a solitary brother remained to rule the whole empire again. After a few more wars and murders, the Roman Empire split back into two, and then into three again.

In other words, there was ambition aplenty, and thus politics aplenty, in the Roman Empire. And much more to come. From 376 to 382, the empire struggled to deal with a major invasion by a large group of desperate Goths, who had been displaced from Germania by Huns advancing from the east. No sooner had the Gothic War concluded than a man with the singularly immodest name of Magnus Maximus, general of the British divisions of the Roman army, sailed his forces across to Gaul to start a civil war. After winning Gaul, he invaded Italy and headed for Mediolanum—and was met by an equally large army drawn from other parts of the empire. The situation was tense. After negotiations led by Ambrose, the bishop who later befriended the confused man, Magnus Maximus settled for being declared emperor of the Western Roman Empire, and agreed to go back to Gaul.

A few months later, the confused man arrived in Mediolanum. His mother followed shortly afterward. So the confused man indeed had a lot on his mind that day in the garden. His meddlesome mother. His own ambitiousness. His breakup with his partner of fifteen years. An impending marriage that horrified him. Civil war compounded by invasion, in both Roman politics and the politics of his personal life, all of which

seemed far from over. A deep doubt over the very basis of truth, justice, and legitimate motivation had taken root in his moral thought.

"I was at war within," he wrote. "So sick was I, so tortured, as I reviled myself more bitterly than ever."

He needed to be completely alone, and moved off deeper into the garden, leaving his friend behind. He lay down beneath a fig tree, "loosing the reins on my sobbing, as tears tore themselves from my eyes." Then he heard "the voice of a boy—or perhaps a girl, I could not tell—chanting in repeated singsong: Lift! Look!"

He could think of no children's game that used such a chant, and concluded it must actually be divine prompting. So he lifted himself up, as the chant instructed. The commandment to look could mean only the book of Paul's letters, which he had left with his friend. He raced back, grabbed it, and the book fell open, by chance, at these lines:

Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

That was it, the origins of his tortures, and those of everyone else: desire—and not just desire for sex and other bodily pleasures but for material gain and other forms of power. Confused no more, at that moment the man who would be known as St. Augustine of Hippo decided to become a Christian and a priest.

Becoming a priest was probably a good career move—although not exactly the career his mother had advocated, despite her promotion of Christianity. It could not have escaped Augustine's attention that Christianity had become the state religion in 380, when the three emperors who then jointly ruled the Roman Empire issued the Edict of Thessalonica. Instead of persecution, Christian leaders like Ambrose were now entrusted with the most delicate tasks of state. Being a priest did require celibacy, though, for Pope Siricius of Rome had issued the *Directa Decretali* in 386, which stipulated that all priests follow "the splendor of chastity." But stop, lift, and look: celibacy also

presented a way out of his engagement to the eleven-year-old.

Still, we cannot doubt that St. Augustine's conversion was deeply felt in the innermost tissues of his morality, as is plain on every page of his *Confessions*, from where we get the story of his garden encounter with the divine. It is equally plain on every page of his *De Civitate Dei*, or *The City of God*, the book he spent fourteen years writing between 412 and 426. By then, Augustine was serving as Bishop of Hippo—a major Roman city in the north African province of Numidia, likely making him as powerful as he would have been as governor. But power, he wrote, was not what he sought. What he sought was to understand power and the origin of our urge for it. Like Thoreau, Augustine saw the source of that urge as lying deep in our urban humanness, in the politics of "the city of this world, a city which aims at dominion, which holds nations in enslavement, but is itself dominated by that very lust of domination." He exhorted us to seek the *Summum Bonum*, the Supreme Good, which is free of politics and cigar smoke and that most basic of desires: pride, or what he also termed "self-love." For, he asked, "what is the origin of our evil will but pride?"

Thoreau found this supreme, absolute good in nature. Augustine found it in supernature, in his faith in the divine. And both shared a deep distrust of the political ways they associated with the city. Nonetheless, Augustine conceived absolute goodness through the image of a city—albeit a very different kind of city, what he called the "Heavenly City." Give up the enticements of "the earthly city, which lives by man's standards," he counseled. Instead, seek "the Heavenly City, which lives according to God's will." For "the two cities were created by two kinds of love: the earthly city was created by self-love reaching the point of contempt for God, the Heavenly City by the love of God carried as far as contempt of self."

Billions today look to this second form of love, hoping such goodness will direct us truly, guiding us through and beyond the ceaseless vortex of human desires. Whether conceived as the nature Thoreau sought by walking west or the divine guidance Augustine sought by looking up, we hope to live not just in a city of God but in a city of the good, sheltered by edifices of the absolute.

Nevertheless, despite our searches for goodness, we've been arguing a lot lately, as a people and as a planet. And the absolutes we've regularly been using to make our various cases don't seem to be helping us resolve matters. What we thought would settle our debates—what nature and science say, what God and his scriptures say, and so what I say too—have only unsettled them the more, for we are not all using the same absolutes. The arguments go on and on unproductively, one absolute clashing with another, until we turn away in frustration and go a-walking in the woods like Thoreau, or in an urban garden like Augustine, seeking to escape the stench of the cigar smoke and the cacophony of the smokers.

A great rush of books of late has taken a look at the religious origins of this frustration. Robert Wright has told us about *The Evolution of God*. Richard Dawkins has told us about *The God Delusion*. Karen Armstrong has told us about *The History of God*, *The Great Transformation*, and *The Case for God*. Elaine Pagels has told us about *The Gnostic Gospels*, *The Origin of Satan*, and *Revelations*. Reza Aslan has told us about the life of the historical Jesus in *Zealot*. These are all valuable books, however they may differ in their predilections and prescriptions.

A great rush of writers have also looked at the ecological troubles that cause us to point fingers at each other, and go away snarling. Charles Wohlforth has described *The Fate of Nature*. Michael Pollan has pointed out *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. Jared Diamond has warned us about *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. Al Gore has tried to get us to pay attention to *An Inconvenient Truth*. Bill McKibben has worried about *The End of Nature*, offered a vision of Hope: *Human and Wild* and a *Deep Economy*, and asked us to prepare for *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*.

I have a feeling these concerns and frustrations are connected. In this book, I trace the social history of both these basic forms of the absolute—the natural and the supernatural—and their interrelationship with ideas and boundaries of human community. Nature, faith, and community together form what I find helpful to envision as an ancient triangle of beliefs, with nature and faith forming the two sides of the base, sometimes supporting and sometimes conflicting in how they uphold community life, and

sometimes supporting and sometimes conflicting with that life.

Today it seems we find more conflict than mutual support emanating from the sides of the base. Yes, some now work to green religion and to sanctify ecology.<sup>24</sup> Some have tried to bring concern for climate change to the pulpit and to bring respect for spirit to our battles over pipelines and the latest housing development proposal. They find this mutual support both possible and necessary. But they take on this good work because it needs to be done. It isn't done already.

This good work isn't done in part because we don't agree on what constitutes the good. We don't agree because we can't agree. The very way we usually conceive of our most cherished beliefs makes talking through our differences nearly impossible. If what makes the good is that it is not human, what good is it to debate the good with a human?

This is unproductive. On the thought that we might be better equipped to resolve our troubles if we knew their origins, in this book I offer an explanation for how this triangle of beliefs came about, and how it has been used in the layout, the moral design, of the city of the good. For there was not always a trigonometry of separations, nature from the divine from the human, just as there isn't one everywhere today to the same degree and sharpness. Perhaps it need not be anywhere so.

Here's the gist of my explanation. Why do we so often embrace absolutist notions, even when they seem an unhelpful basis for discussing how we should live together with each other and the planet? Because of an old cultural habit that emerged out of a mighty transformation in human affairs: the expansion of cities in growing states and empires. Inequality grew along with accumulating urban wealth. Desire seemed the new coin of social life. People were troubled by this challenge to justice, either to defend inequality or to confront and critique it. And they found a powerful manner of moral thought to justify their passions: what I will term a natural conscience, based on faith in forms of absolute goodness we regard as free of the human and thus free of politics—but that often divide us nonetheless. They sought absolution in the absolute, absolving the human by removing the human.

We still often seek this absolution because it comforts yet today—until you encounter someone who uses a different basis for the absolute. Nature versus the divine, say. Or a different religion. Or a different interpretation of what is natural. Such fundamental differences—truly differences in our fundamentals—can be deeply disturbing, not just emotionally but socially.

So we shut, even shout, conversation down. For to debate the implications of one's moral differences is to risk implicating oneself and all one's close associates. Our ideas are never just ideas. They create and manifest social ties. To trust an idea is to trust the well and watershed from which it springs. To threaten an idea is to threaten our trust in the well and watershed, the idea's source and source's source: community itself. To a social being, there can be hardly any threat greater. And so, largely without deliberate intention, we often use absolutes to close ourselves down to the logics others present to us about social and ecological life. Alas, rather than comfort, much pain and difficulty result, for in so doing we cut ourselves off not only to potentially worthy ideas but to one another. We need what I will term a multilogical approach to truth and moral thought to better articulate, learn from, and identify with our varying passions and commitments to each corner of the ancient triangle.

That's an overview of my explanation for the divide that emerged, and that has largely remained, between the top and the bottom of the triangle—between the human apex and nature and the divine along the base. Here it is in a clause: because of the moral attraction to urbanizing societies of a foundation for justice apart from human desires. But what about the sides of the base? Why did nature and the divine also separate from each other?

Again for reasons associated with the rise of cities, states, and empires. Culturally, the concept of nature offered to an absolute conception of the divine an account of the origin of desire: in the nature of the body and its ecology. To overcome our nature was to overcome desire, and thus politics. As well, this negative view of nature culturally resonated with a second economic inequality. Not only did the expansion of cities manifest an intensified vertical social conflict over class. It also manifested an intensified horizontal

conflict between urban and rural, between what I will term the bourgeois and the pagan. The wealth accumulation that was the basis for the rise of social class in the city had its own basis in milking wealth from the countryside, harvesting the harvest through taxes and tithes. Associating the people of the countryside with nature's moral backwardness helped justify this horizontal inequality. And it also led to neglect and even disdain for ecological questions, due to the comforting distance that wealth and trade provided from the vagaries of climate, crop disease, soil health, and other matters of sustenance.

Nature was not always seen in a negative way, however. Nearly from the very origin of the concept during periods of urban expansion and social class development in ancient Greece, India, and China, nature could be an absolute goodness in its own right, separate from the politics of human desire. Indeed, advocates of nature as an absolute have often seen religion as a human institution, and thus an institution of human politics, not a preserve apart from politics. Religion, in this view, obscures the absolute and its essential nature. Consequently, either nature or the divine—sometimes together, sometimes in conflict with each other—can serve to ground a natural conscience. But significantly, whether conceived as nature or supernature, the idea of absolute good is historically an urban idea, a bourgeois idea, even if today it is also often strongly held by rural people. (You no longer need to live in the city to be largely bourgeois) The city of the good began as the good of the city.

All of which indicates that we have not always separated nature from the divine and from the human. Nor do we everywhere, or anywhere fully, today. The pagan view was and is that nature and the divine are entangled with the human—and not necessarily good. There is no triangle in the pagan view, except through triangulation from the bourgeois. The ancient triangle is not so ancient as that, nor as universal today as that. (You no longer need to live in the countryside to be largely pagan either.) Perhaps we have more potential than we commonly recognize for a multilogical relationship to each other and our ecologies, from pagan to bourgeois.

I head far back into human history, and range far across the globe, to explain and substantiate these claims. The book travels among the ancient

Sumerians, Greeks, Romans, Chinese, Hebrews, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Mayans, and more. It follows developments in moral thought about the good up to the present day, from religion to science to environmentalism, often conversing along the way with contemporary indigenous and other fine folk that I have had the fortune to encounter in my own travels. Throughout, I relate these developments to their urban and rural circumstances—not to give analytic priority to material and economic conditions, but rather to give analytic balance with the cultural and symbolic.

I do not intend to be comprehensive about any of this. With so much to cover, to be comprehensive would risk being incomprehensible. My approach is to visit intimately with places and peoples in the fullness of moments, much like I have done already with Thoreau and St. Augustine. By going small, the book aims to connect to the big through an understanding of contexts and their interconnections.

Back in the late 1940s, following the horrors of National Socialism, social philosopher Karl Jaspers found himself searching for something encouraging to say about modernity and its contexts. He hit upon a powerful empirical observation, closely related to the argument I make in this book. Beginning around 800 BCE, he observed, thinkers in several major civilizations came up with a similar new take on faith. The divine was one, good, and transcendentally universal, promoting a new "consciousness" of the "unity of mankind," as Jaspers put it. Zoroaster, Mahavira, Siddhartha Gautama, Plato, Laozi, Vyasa, Hillel, Jesus, and Muhammad all made this case in various ways that remain extremely influential. Jaspers called this pivotal period the "Axial Age," arguing it was as transformative as the Enlightenment.

Jaspers also noted that these ideas emerged within societies developing from the local social relations of agrarianism into cities and city-states. Expanded trade was leading to new connections, he suggested, and thus a new sense of connectedness. A universal, unified, and transcendent sense of the divine, and the sense that this transcendent universality was good, resonated with the new connectedness. We are all one, and it is part of that recognition that we also envision the divine as a universal unity of the good, he contended.

We cannot doubt Jaspers's main empirical point: the rise of universalistic, unified, and transcendent notions of divine goodness was closely associated with a dramatic expansion of cities, states, and empires. Karen Armstrong's many books document this main point in far greater detail (and far more compellingly) than Jaspers himself did. And like Jaspers, Armstrong seeks something encouraging to say about modernity, especially in the face of our constant wars, many of them religiously inspired. The social critic Robert Wright makes a related case about the "evolution of god" toward overcoming "zero-sum thinking" that divides ethnicities, nations, and other social groups. We increasingly love a god of the good as we ourselves become good, and vice versa, the Axial theorists contend.

But Axial theory does not consider the ecological implications of these new urban ideas. Nor does it reckon with the social inequalities that accompanied the rise of the new religions. The Axial theorists suffer from what we might call a civilizationist bias—emphasizing the ways in which our growing urbanism, technological development, and globalization reflect an increasing commitment to good things like democracy and justice. I do not wish to turn the tables here and argue the reverse. My point is not that the city of the good is really the city of the bad. Yet the motives and consequences of the growth of cities, states, and empires seem to me considerably more complex and contradictory. A new commitment to the good there may have been, but at the same time the new urban societies, states, and empires saw a new disregard for ecological questions and a dramatic rise in social inequality, both vertical and horizontal.

The Axial theorists also imply, and sometimes overtly state, another bias closely related to civilizationism: an evolutionary bias toward seeing social change as directional. Here they are joined by an old academic line of argument, especially pronounced in the writings of Emile Durkheim and Ferdinand Tönnies, two of the founding figures of my own profession, sociology. Durkheim and Tönnies suggested that it is helpful to distinguish between two broad ways of organizing community life. Durkheim called the differentiation of roles most characteristic of the city "organic solidarity" and the ties of similarity he found most

characteristic of the countryside "mechanical solidarity." By organic solidarity, he had in mind ties between professions like doctors and lawyers, carpenters and plumbers, all of whom rely on each other's difference. By mechanical solidarity, he had in mind the kinship of family and tribe, the members of which rely on each other's similarity. Tönnies made a related distinction between the instrumental social relations of the city, what he termed "gesellschaft," and the affective ties of the countryside, what he called "gemeinschaft." Although they framed the matter somewhat differently, both Durkheim and Tönnies suggested that human social life is steadily evolving away from the past of mechanical solidarity, gemeinschaft, and the rural toward the organic solidarity, gesellschaft, and urbanism of the future. Durkheim and Tönnies were a bit ambivalent about whether this change was a wholly good thing, though. The Axial theorists are not: the Axial ideas that emerged in cities are morally better, they contend.

Again, I do not intend to argue the reverse. But I think we need to take care not to mistake history for evolution. Yes, the idea of the good—envisioned, as I will argue, via a triangle of separations, nature from the divine from the human, and thus emancipated from politics—first arose in cities. Yes, people of the countryside had different concerns and ways of community. But those concerns and ways did not go away. They did not go away in the countryside, nor did they fully diminish in the city. In their better moments, Tönnies recognized that "the essence of both gemeinschaft and gesellschaft is found interwoven in all kinds of associations," and Durkheim noted that mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity "are two aspects of one and the same reality." These are matters of social context, not the unstoppable flight of time's arrow.

I offer the terms "bourgeois" and "pagan" as more contextually sensitive terms. Different contexts raise different concerns. By "bourgeois"—a word derived from the Latin for a fortified town—I mean the concerns over the justice of desire and the vicissitudes of wealth that originally arose in the city, but are no longer so confined. By "pagan"—a word derived from the Latin for a country dweller—I mean the concerns over the troubles of disloyalty and the vicissitudes of agriculture and



ecology that originally arose in the countryside, but are also not so confined. They are not so confined because our contexts are not so pure. (And I should stress that by "pagan" I do not mean New Age. I mean the ancient and living traditions that descend from the concerns of rural context the world over.)

However, we should not switch from determinism by time to determinism by context. Our ideas are not so compliant. Ideas have an independence of their own that we carry with us into a context, as anyone who has ever found that they misunderstood a situation (which must be everyone) will know, or as anyone who has ever surprised themselves with how well they coped with a situation (which I hope is everyone) will also know. Our ideas often serve us well. And they often do not.

I have tried to write the book in a way that manifests a sensitivity to both time and context, without slipping into a determinism of either. Although the book follows a loosely historical narrative, I often bounce from instance to instance and situation to situation. One moment I am talking about the ancient Maya, the next I am talking with a Cabécar Indian from Costa Rica, and the next with my old friend Mpumelelo Ncwadi, who hails from present day South Africa. I do so to make connections and comparisons between pasts, between presents, and between pasts and presents. And our potential futures.

For better or for worse, most of us now live in dominantly bourgeois societies, whether we live in town or in the countryside. Bourgeois concerns increasingly worry all of us, in both developed countries and developing, and our moral orientations need to speak to those anxieties. We also remain more pagan than we generally recognize, and I believe we need ways to attend to those passions as well. But I do not write to advocate a rejection of bourgeois concerns.

Nonetheless I am troubled by how dominantly bourgeois people like me typically seek the good. Orienting our moral thought around ideas of absolute goodness helps resolve many issues for us, but many other issues come with that form of consideration. We have come to love the absolute, in its many manifestations, as a way to resolve the moral troubles raised by bourgeois life. Placed back in social context, however, such comfort soon leads to discomfort. We've got a lot of talking to

do. Yet absolute answers that are beyond discussion make it very difficult to have a discussion. Starting with positions that we believe are good because they are beyond the political makes it very hard to have good politics. Rather than dialogue, we fall into monologues, shouted by bullhorn from the heads of our advancing armies of supporters and conscripts. For if our views are absolute, we feel no compulsion to listen to what others have to say. Our minds, and our motives, are made up already.

A heartbreaking consequence is what might be called the conundrum of the absolute. Some of the most wonderful, selfless, and beautiful things that people have ever done have been in the name of absolutes, variously understood. But as well, some of the most horrific, selfish, and ugly things we have ever done have been in the name of absolutes.

Magnificently, in the name of community with nature, we have saved the tiger, the elephant, the American bison, and the California condor. We have established vast wilderness preserves, feeling, like Thoreau, that in wildness is indeed the preservation of the world. We have begun to clean up the water, air, and land upon which all life depends, generally in the face of political forces who have strongly and slyly opposed these efforts. We have found common cause with others because we recognized in them the same natures we find in ourselves.

Through faith in supernature, we have fed the starving and given shelter to the homeless and the ill-housed. We have strengthened commitments at home and abroad, reaching in to reach out, reaching out to reach in. We have limited ambitions that, on reflection, served only to advance our dominance in our own little realms and no broader purpose. In service of both nature and supernature, we have sacrificed much of our selves for collective ends that we came to understand we should hold dearer.

Yet in the name of nature, we have also expropriated land from the poor to make way for parks and tourism. We have competed with the disadvantaged on unequal terms for homes and lives that are comparatively free of the pollution and danger of industrialism. We have tortured, enslaved, and slaughtered those we deemed to have natures apart from and beneath our own. In

the name of our faith in supernatural absolutes, we have waged divisive moral campaigns. We have suppressed the rights of others and crushed their self-regard. And we have tortured, enslaved, and slaughtered those who committed to supernatures we deemed apart from and beneath our own. Our transcendent beliefs are supposed to motivate our compassion and faith in the golden rules of human and ecological relationships. Sadly, they have often motivated and justified cruelty and leaden rules of relationships.

For these moral ideas are also ideas of community and its boundaries. Our conceptions of both nature and the divine have led us to open our ears and our eyes to others, but also, when envisioned as absolutes, to shut them. We come to fear difference rather than relish the creativity of the multilogical that comes from dialogue and debate, through which we are always learning and becoming, even when we do not fully agree (which may always be the case). We come to fear difference especially in moments of political conflict. Such moments are precisely when we find the monological character of the absolute the most seductive, for monologue suppresses difference. Such moments are equally when those seeking means to manipulate the many find the absolute most useful to their goals. As we look out across the world, we seem to be in such a moment of heightened political conflict today, and thus heightened attraction for answers from beyond—even as they lead us, or are used to lead us, astray. Absolutes are always deeply political, at the same time that they appear to provide a basis for action that is beyond politics.

These are the perils of innocence. Yet, the Russian social philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin noted, monologue is never completely absolute. As Bakhtin put it, "there is neither a first nor a last word."<sup>38</sup> Monologue always contains strains of dialogue and the multilogical, for it must take its audience at least a bit into account to make its case. And often more than a bit. In other words, the absolute is never absolute. Across the long history of natures, faiths, and communities, we have oscillated from more monologic to more multilogical moments and modes of interaction and debate. Sometimes even in the midst of heightened conflict we have found ways to open conversation, to learn from each

other, to jointly construct new alternatives with broad and diverse benefit.

I find much cause for hope in this potential non-absoluteness of our absolutes—hope that we may come to accept the certainty of uncertainty in a world that is ever unfinished, always open, full of difference and conflict, and therefore ceaselessly intriguing, alive, and creative

[Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress](#) by Steven Pinker [Viking, 9780525427575]

"My new favorite book of all time." --Bill Gates

"A terrific book...[Pinker] recounts the progress across a broad array of metrics, from health to wars, the environment to happiness, equal rights to quality of life." --*The New York Times*

The follow-up to Pinker's groundbreaking [The Better Angels of Our Nature](#) presents the big picture of human progress: people are living longer, healthier, freer, and happier lives, and while our problems are formidable, the solutions lie in the Enlightenment ideal of using reason and science.

Is the world really falling apart? Is the ideal of progress obsolete? In this elegant assessment of the human condition in the third millennium, cognitive scientist and public intellectual Steven Pinker urges us to step back from the gory headlines and prophecies of doom, which play to our psychological biases. Instead, follow the data: In seventy-five jaw-dropping graphs, Pinker shows that life, health, prosperity, safety, peace, knowledge, and happiness are on the rise, not just in the West, but worldwide. This progress is not the result of some cosmic force. It is a gift of the Enlightenment: the conviction that reason and science can enhance human flourishing.

Far from being a naïve hope, the Enlightenment, we now know, has worked. But more than ever, it needs a vigorous defense. The Enlightenment project swims against currents of human nature--tribalism, authoritarianism, demonization, magical thinking--which demagogues are all too willing to exploit. Many commentators, committed to political, religious, or romantic ideologies, fight a rearguard action against it. The result is a corrosive fatalism and a willingness to wreck the precious institutions

of liberal democracy and global cooperation.

With intellectual depth and literary flair, [Enlightenment Now](#) makes the case for reason, science, and humanism: the ideals we need to confront our problems and continue our progress.

Excerpt: The second half of the second decade of the third millennium would not seem to be an auspicious time to publish a book on the historical sweep of progress and its causes. At the time of this writing, my country is led by people with a dark vision of the current moment: "mothers and children trapped in poverty ... an education system which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of all knowledge ... and the crime, and the gangs, and the drugs that have stolen too many lives." We are in an "outright war" that is "expanding and metastasizing." The blame for this nightmare may be placed on a "global power structure" that has eroded "the underlying spiritual and moral foundations of Christianity."

In the pages that follow, I will show that this bleak assessment of the state of the world is wrong. And not just a little wrong—wrong wrong, flat-earth wrong, couldn't-be-more-wrong. But this book is not about the forty-fifth president of the United States and his advisors. It was conceived some years before Donald Trump announced his candidacy, and I hope it will outlast his administration by many more. The ideas that prepared the ground for his election are in fact widely shared among intellectuals and laypeople, on both the left and the right. They include pessimism about the way the world is heading, cynicism about the institutions of modernity, and an inability to conceive of a higher purpose in anything other than religion. I will present a different understanding of the world, grounded in fact and inspired by the ideals of the Enlightenment: reason, science, humanism, and progress. Enlightenment ideals, I hope to show, are timeless, but they have never been more relevant than they are right now...

Though the moral and intellectual case for humanism is, I believe, overwhelming, some might wonder whether it is any match for religion, nationalism, and romantic heroism in the campaign for people's hearts. Will the Enlightenment ultimately fail because it cannot speak to primal human needs? Should humanists hold revival meetings at which preachers thump Spinoza's Ethics

on the pulpit and ecstatic congregants roll back their eyes and babble in Esperanto? Should they stage rallies in which young men in colored shirts salute giant posters of John Stuart Mill? I think not; recall that a vulnerability is not the same as a need. The citizens of Denmark, New Zealand, and other happy parts of the world get by perfectly well without these paroxysms. The bounty of a cosmopolitan secular democracy is there for everyone to see.

Still, the appeal of regressive ideas is perennial, and the case for reason, science, humanism, and progress always has to be made. When we fail to acknowledge our hard-won progress, we may come to believe that perfect order and universal prosperity are the natural state of affairs, and that every problem is an outrage that calls for blaming evildoers, wrecking institutions, and empowering a leader who will restore the country to its rightful greatness. I have made my own best case for progress and the ideals that made it possible, and have dropped hints on how journalists, intellectuals, and other thoughtful people (including the readers of this book) might avoid contributing to the widespread heedlessness of the gifts of the Enlightenment.

Remember your math: an anecdote is not a trend. Remember your history: the fact that something is bad today doesn't mean it was better in the past. Remember your philosophy: one cannot reason that there's no such thing as reason, or that something is true or good because God said it is. And remember your psychology: much of what we know isn't so, especially when our comrades know it too.

Keep some perspective. Not every problem is a Crisis, Plague, Epidemic, or Existential Threat, and not every change is the End of This, the Death of That, or the Dawn of a Post-Something Era. Don't confuse pessimism with profundity: problems are inevitable, but problems are solvable, and diagnosing every setback as a symptom of a sick society is a cheap grab for gravitas. Finally, drop the Nietzsche. His ideas may seem edgy, authentic, baaaad, while humanism seems sappy, unhip, uncool. But what's so funny about peace, love, and understanding?

The case for Enlightenment Now is not just a matter of debunking fallacies or disseminating data. It may be cast as a stirring narrative, and I hope that

people with more artistic flair and rhetorical power than I can tell it better and spread it farther. The story of human progress is truly heroic. It is glorious. It is uplifting. It is even, I daresay, spiritual. It goes something like this.

We are born into a pitiless universe, facing steep odds against life-enabling order and in constant jeopardy of falling apart. We were shaped by a force that is ruthlessly competitive. We are made from crooked timber, vulnerable to illusions, self-centeredness, and at times astounding stupidity.

Yet human nature has also been blessed with resources that open a space for a kind of redemption. We are endowed with the power to combine ideas recursively, to have thoughts about our thoughts. We have an instinct for language, allowing us to share the fruits of our experience and ingenuity. We are deepened with the capacity for sympathy—for pity, imagination, compassion, commiseration.

These endowments have found ways to magnify their own power. The scope of language has been augmented by the written, printed, and electronic word. Our circle of sympathy has been expanded by history, journalism, and the narrative arts. And our puny rational faculties have been multiplied by the norms and institutions of reason: intellectual curiosity, open debate, skepticism of authority and dogma, and the burden of proof to verify ideas by confronting them against reality.

As the spiral of recursive improvement gathers momentum, we eke out victories against the forces that grind us down, not least the darker parts of our own nature. We penetrate the mysteries of the cosmos, including life and mind. We live longer, suffer less, learn more, get smarter, and enjoy more small pleasures and rich experiences. Fewer of us are killed, assaulted, enslaved, oppressed, or exploited by the others. From a few oases, the territories with peace and prosperity are growing, and could someday encompass the globe. Much suffering remains, and tremendous peril. But ideas on how to reduce them have been voiced, and an infinite number of others are yet to be conceived.

We will never have a perfect world, and it would be dangerous to seek one. But there is no limit to the betterments we can attain if we continue to apply knowledge to enhance human flourishing.

This heroic story is not just another myth. Myths are fictions, but this one is true—true to the best of our knowledge, which is the only truth we can have. We believe it because we have reasons to believe it. As we learn more, we can show which parts of the story continue to be true, and which ones false—as any of them might be, and any could become.

And the story belongs not to any tribe but to all of humanity—to any sentient creature with the power of reason and the urge to persist in its being. For it requires only the convictions that life is better than death, health is better than sickness, abundance is better than want, freedom is better than coercion, happiness is better than suffering, and knowledge is better than superstition and ignorance.

[The Strange Order of Things: Life, Feeling, and the Making of Cultures](#) by Antonio Damasio  
[Pantheon, 9780307908759]

From one of our preeminent neuroscientists: a landmark reflection that spans the biological and social sciences, offering a new way of understanding the origins of life, feeling, and culture.

[The Strange Order of Things](#) is a pathbreaking investigation into homeostasis, the condition of that regulates human physiology within the range that makes possible not only the survival but also the flourishing of life. Antonio Damasio makes clear that we descend biologically, psychologically, and even socially from a long lineage that begins with single living cells; that our minds and cultures are linked by an invisible thread to the ways and means of ancient unicellular life and other primitive life-forms; and that inherent in our very chemistry is a powerful force, a striving toward life maintenance that governs life in all its guises, including the development of genes that help regulate and transmit life. In [The Strange Order of Things](#), Damasio gives us a new way of comprehending the world and our place in it.

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Excerpt: [The Strange Order of Things](#) is about one interest and one idea. I have long been intrigued in human affect—the world of emotions and feelings—and have spent many years investigating it: why and how we emote, feel, use feelings to construct our selves; how feelings assist or

undermine our best intentions; why and how brains interact with the body to support such functions. I have new facts and interpretations to share on these matters.

As for the idea, it is very simple: feelings have not been given the credit they deserve as motives, monitors, and negotiators of human cultural endeavors. Humans have distinguished themselves from all other beings by creating a spectacular collection of objects, practices, and ideas, collectively known as cultures. The collection includes the arts, philosophical inquiry, moral systems and religious beliefs, justice, governance, economic institutions, and technology and science. Why and how did this process begin? A frequent answer to this question invokes an important faculty of the human mind—verbal language—along with distinctive features such as intense sociality and superior intellect. For those who are biologically inclined the answer also includes natural selection operating at the level of genes. I have no doubt that intellect, sociality, and language have played key roles in the process, and it goes without saying that the organisms capable of cultural invention, along with the specific faculties used in the invention, are present in humans by the grace of natural selection and genetic transmission. The idea is that something else was required to jump-start the saga of human cultures. That something else was a motive. I am referring specifically to feelings, from pain and suffering to well-being and pleasure.

Consider medicine, one of our most significant cultural enterprises. Medicine's combination of technology and science began as a response to the pain and suffering caused by diseases of every sort, from physical trauma and infections to cancers, contrasted with the very opposite of pain and suffering: well-being, pleasures, the prospect of thriving. Medicine did not begin as an intellectual sport meant to exercise one's wits over a diagnostic puzzle or a physiological mystery. It began as a consequence of specific feelings of patients and specific feelings of early physicians, including but not limited to the compassion that may be born of empathy. Those motives remain today. No reader will have failed to notice how visits to the dentist and surgical procedures have changed for the better in our own lifetime. The primary motive behind improvements such as efficient anesthetics

and precise instrumentation is the management of feelings of discomfort. The activity of engineers and scientists plays a commendable role in this endeavor, but it is a motivated role. The profit motive of the drug and instrumentation industries also plays a significant part because the public does need to reduce its suffering and industries respond to that need. The pursuit of profit is fueled by varied yearnings, a desire for advancement, prestige, even greed, which are none other than feelings. It is not possible to comprehend the intense effort to develop cures for cancers or Alzheimer's disease without considering feelings as motives, monitors, and negotiators of the process. Nor is it possible to comprehend, for example, the less intense effort with which Western cultures have pursued cures for malaria in Africa or the management of drug addictions most everywhere without considering the respective web of motivating and inhibiting feelings. Language, sociality, knowledge, and reason are the primary inventors and executors of these complicated processes. But feelings get to motivate them, stay on to check the results, and help negotiate the necessary adjustments.

The idea, in essence, is that cultural activity began and remains deeply embedded in feeling. The favorable and unfavorable interplay of feeling and reason must be acknowledged if we are to understand the conflicts and contradictions of the human condition.

Stranger Orders?

[The Strange Order of Things](#) title was suggested by two facts. The first is that as early as 100 million years ago some species of insects developed a collection of social behaviors, practices, and instruments that can appropriately be called cultural when we compare them with the human social counterparts. The second fact is that even further back in time, in all likelihood several billion years ago, unicellular organisms also exhibited social behaviors whose schematics conform to aspects of human sociocultural behaviors.

These facts certainly contradict a conventional notion: that something as complex as social behaviors capable of improving life management could only have sprung from the minds of evolved organisms, not necessarily human, but complex

enough and close enough to humans to engender the requisite sophistication. The social features that I am writing about emerged early in the history of life, are abundant in the biosphere, and did not have to wait for anything humanlike to show up on Earth. This order is strange indeed, unexpected to say the least.

A closer look reveals details behind these intriguing facts, for example, successful cooperative behaviors of the sort that we tend to associate, and reasonably so, with human wisdom and maturity. But cooperative strategies did not have to wait for wise and mature minds to appear. Such strategies are possibly as old as life itself and were never more brilliantly displayed than in the convenient treaty celebrated between two bacteria: a pushy, upstart bacterium that wanted to take over a bigger and more established one. The battle resulted in a draw, and the pushy bacterium became a cooperative satellite of the established one. Eukaryotes, cells with a nucleus and complicated organelles such as mitochondria, were probably born this way, over the negotiating table of life.

The bacteria in the above tale do not have minds, let alone wise minds. The pushy bacterium operates as if concluding that "when we cannot win over them, we might as well join them." The established bacterium, on the other side, operates as if thinking, "I may as well accept this invader provided it offers something to me." But neither bacterium thought anything, of course. No mental reflection was involved, no overt consideration of prior knowledge, no cunning, guile, kindness, fair play, or diplomatic conciliation. The equation of the problem was resolved blindly and from within the process, bottom up, as an option that, in retrospect, worked for both sides. The successful option was shaped by the imperative requirements of homeostasis, and that was not magic, except in a poetic sense. It consisted of concrete physical and chemical constraints applied to the life process, within the cells, in the context of their physicochemical relations with the environment. Of note, the idea of algorithm is applicable to this situation. The genetic machinery of the successful organisms made sure the strategy would remain in the repertoire of future generations. Had the option not worked, it would have joined the large graveyard of evolution. We would never have known that fact.

The intriguing process of cooperation does not stand alone, unaided. Bacteria are able to sense the presence of others thanks to the chemical probes installed in their membranes, and they can even tell relatives from strangers via the molecular structure of those probes. This is a modest forerunner of our sensory perceptions, closer to taste and smell than to the image-based hearing or seeing.

These strangely ordered emergences reveal the deep power of homeostasis. The indomitable imperative of homeostasis operated by trial and error to select naturally available behavioral solutions to a number of problems of life management. The organisms searched and screened, unwittingly, the physics of their environments and the chemistry within their walls and came up, unwittingly, with at least adequate but often good solutions for the maintenance and flourishing of life. The marvel is that when comparable problem configurations were encountered on other occasions, at other points in the messy evolution of life-forms, the same solutions were found. The tendency toward particular solutions, toward similar schemes, toward some degree of inevitability, results from the structure and circumstances of living organisms and their relation to the environment and depends on homeostasis writ large. All of which puts one in mind of D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson's writings on growth and form—for example, the forms and structures of cells, tissues, eggs, shells, and so forth.

Cooperation evolved as a twin to competition, which helped select the organisms that exhibited the most productive strategies. As a consequence, when we behave cooperatively today, at some personal sacrifice, and when we call that behavior altruistic, it is not the case that we humans have invented the cooperative strategy out of the kindness of our hearts. The strategy emerged strangely early and is now old hat. What is certainly different and "modern" is the fact that when we encounter a problem that can be resolved with or without an altruistic response, we now can think and feel through the process in our minds and can, at least in part, deliberately select the approach we will deploy. We have options. We can affirm altruism and suffer the attending losses or withhold altruism and not lose anything, or even gain, at least for a while.

The issue of altruism is through and through a good entry into the distinction between early "cultures" and the full-fledged variety. The origin of altruism is blind cooperation, but altruism can be deconstructed and taught in families and schools as a deliberate human strategy. As is the case with several benevolent and beneficent emotions—compassion, admiration, awe, gratitude—altruistic behavior can be encouraged, exercised, trained, and practiced in society. Or not. Nothing guarantees that it will always work, but it is there as a conscious human resource available via education.

Another example of the contrast between origins and fully developed cultures can be seen around the notion of profit. Cells have literally been looking for profit for a very long time, by which I mean governing their metabolism so that it yields positive energy balances. Those cells that really succeed in life are good at generating positive energy balances, that is, "profits." But the fact that profit is natural and generally beneficial does not make it necessarily good, culturally speaking. Cultures can decide when natural things are good—and determine the degree of goodness—and when they are not. Greed is just as natural as profit but is not culturally good, contrary to what Gordon Gekko famously affirmed.

The most strangely ordered emergences of high faculties are probably feeling and consciousness. It is not unreasonable just incorrect—to imagine that the mental refinement we know as feelings would have arisen from the most advanced creatures in evolution, if not from humans alone. The same applies to consciousness. Subjectivity, the hallmark of consciousness, is the ability to own one's mental experiences and endow those experiences with an individual perspective. The prevalent view is still that subjectivity is unlikely to have emerged in any creature besides sophisticated humans. Even more incorrectly, it is frequently assumed that such refined processes as feeling and consciousness must result from the operation of the most modern, most humanly evolved structures of the central nervous system, namely, the glorious cerebral cortices. The public interested in such matters actually favors the cerebral cortices, period, and so do notable neuroscientists and philosophers of mind. The search for the "neural correlates of consciousness" actively pursued by contemporary scientists has centered on

the cerebral cortex exclusively. Not only that, it has focused on the process of vision. Vision is also the process elected by philosophers of mind to ground their discussions of mental experience, subjectivity, and the reference to qualia.

The prevalent view, however, is wrong on all counts. Feelings and subjectivity, as far as we can gather, depended on the prior emergence of nervous systems with central components, but there is no justification for favoring the cerebral cortex as responsible for the job. On the contrary, brain-stem nuclei and nuclei in the telencephalon, all located below the cerebral cortex, are the critical structures to support feeling and, by extension, the qualia that are part of our understanding of consciousness. As far as consciousness is concerned, only two of the critical processes I discussed—the construction of body phantom perspective and the process of integrating experiences—are likely to depend mostly on cerebral cortices. Moreover, the emergence of feeling and subjectivity is not recent at all, let alone exclusively human. It is likely to have happened long ago, over the Cambrian period. Not only are all vertebrates likely to be conscious experiencers of a variety of feelings but so are a number of invertebrates whose central nervous system design resembles that of humans as far as spinal cord and brain stem are concerned. Social insects are likely to qualify, and so do charming octopuses drawing on a very different brain design.

The inescapable conclusion is that feeling and subjectivity are old abilities and that they did not depend on the sophisticated cerebral cortex of upper vertebrates, let alone humans, to make their debut. This qualifies as strange, but once again things get even stranger. Far earlier than the Cambrian period, unicellular organisms could respond to injuries to their integrity with defensive and stabilizing chemical and physical reactions, the latter something akin to flinching and wincing. Well, those reactions are, in practical terms, emotive responses, the sorts of action programs that later in evolution could be represented mentally as a feeling. Curiously, even the process of perspective taking is likely to have a very old origin. The sensing and responding of a single cell have an implicit "perspective," the perspective of that particular "individual" organism and that organism alone,



except that the implicit perspective is not secondarily represented in a separate map. That may well be an ancestor to subjectivity, an ancestor that one day did become explicit in organisms with minds. I should insist that brilliant as these early processes are, they are through and through about behaviors, smart, useful actions. As far as I can see, there is nothing mental or experiential about them—no mind, no feeling, no consciousness. I am very open to more revelations from the world of very small organisms, but I do not expect to read about the phenomenology of microorganisms anytime soon. Or ever.

In brief, the assembly of what became feelings and consciousness for us was made gradually, incrementally, but irregularly, along separate lines of evolutionary history. The fact that we can find so much in common in the social and affective behaviors of single-celled organisms, sponges and hydras, cephalopods, and mammals suggests a common root for the problems of life regulation in different creatures and also a shared solution: obeying the homeostatic imperative.

Looming large in the history of homeostatically satisfying accretions is the emergence of nervous systems. Nervous systems opened the way for maps and images, for configurational, "resemblative" representations, and that was, in the deepest of senses, transformative. Nervous systems were transformative even if they did not and do not work alone, even if they are primarily servants of a larger calling: maintaining productive, homeostasis-abiding lives in complicated organisms.

The above considerations take us to another important part of the strangely ordered emergence of mind, feeling, and consciousness, one that is subtle and easy to miss. It has to do with the notion that neither parts of nervous systems nor whole brains are the sole manufacturers and providers of mental phenomena. It is unlikely that neural phenomena alone could produce the functional background required for so many aspects of minds, but it is certainly the case that they could not do so in regard to feelings. A close two-way interaction between nervous systems and the non-nervous structures of organisms is a requirement. Neural and non-neural structures and processes are not just contiguous but continuous partners, interactively. They are not aloof entities signaling each other like

chips in a cell phone. In plain talk, brains and bodies are in the same mind-enabling soup.

Countless problems of philosophy and psychology can begin to be approached productively once the relationships of "body and brain" are placed in this new light. The entrenched dualism that began in Athens, was grandfathered by Descartes, resisted Spinoza's broadside, and has been fiercely exploited by the computational sciences is a position whose time has passed. A new, biologically integrated position is now required.

Nothing could be more different from the conception of the relation between minds and brains with which I started my career. I began reading Warren McCulloch, Norbert Wiener, and Claude Shannon when I was twenty, and due to several quirks of destiny McCulloch would soon become my first American mentor along with Norman Geschwind. This was a foundational, exhilarating time for science, one that opened the way for the extraordinary successes of neurobiology, the computational sciences, and artificial intelligence. In retrospect, however, it had little to offer by way of a realistic view of what human minds look and feel like. How could it, given that the respective theory disengaged the dried-up mathematical description of the activity of neurons from the thermodynamics of the life process? Boolean algebra has its limits when it comes to making minds.

Something that made good use of the cerebral cortices, although it did not have to wait for cerebral cortices to appear, human or otherwise, was the ability to survey the operations of numerous systems inside living organisms and formulate predictions about the future of those operations, based on the past history of the organism and on its current performance. I am talking, in other words, about surveillance, and I use the term advisedly.

When I described the structure and function of our peripheral nervous systems, I mentioned that given the astonishing continuity and interactivity of nervous systems and organisms, nerve fibers get to "visit" every part of our bodies and report on the local state of operations at all those sites to spinal ganglia, to trigeminal ganglia, and to central nervous system nuclei. In brief, in some sense, nerve fibers are "surveyors" of the organism's vast



estates. So are, by the way, the lymphocytes of the immune system that patrol the entire landmass of our bodies in search of the bacterial and viral interlopers that need to be kept at bay. A number of nuclei in the spinal cord, brain stem, and hypothalamus contain the neural know-how required to respond to the information so gathered and act on its basis, defensively, as needed. Moreover, the cerebral cortices can scrutinize reams of prior related data and predict what may happen next. Usefully, they can even anticipate untoward drifts of internal function. The useful predictions are revealed as feelings that are, as we have seen, complex mental experiences that result from blending live data sets originating from certain regions, or even globally, relative to the entire body.

Recently, it has become fashionable in the computer sciences and in the world of artificial intelligence to talk about Big Data and about its predictive powers, as inventions of modern technology. But brains, as noted above, and not human brains alone, have long been "Big Data" handlers when they operate homeostasis at high neural levels. When, for example, we humans intuit the outcome of a particular dispute, we make ample use of our "Big Data" support systems. We draw on past surveillance, recorded in memory, and on prediction algorithms.

It should be noted that the extraordinary surveillance and espionage capabilities of modern governments, social media behemoths, and companies that spy for hire are only the latest users of nature's original unpaid franchise. We cannot fault nature for developing homeostatically useful surveillance systems, on the contrary, but we can question and judge the governments and companies that reinvented the surveillance formula merely to strengthen their power and their monetary worth. Questioning and judging are the legitimate business of cultures.

The ordering of all these culture-related emergences has been strange indeed, hardly fitting one's first guess. There are, however, some welcome exceptions. One would expect philosophical inquiry, religious beliefs, true moral systems, and the arts to have emerged late in evolution and be prevalently human. And so they did, and so they are.

The picture that comes to view when such strangely ordered emergences are considered is now clearer. For most of the history of life, specifically for about 3.5 or more billions of years, numerous species of animals and plants exhibited abundant abilities to sense and respond to the world around, exhibited intelligent social behaviors, and accumulated biological devices that made them live more efficiently or longer or both and made them able to pass on to progenies the secret of their flourishing lives. Their lives exhibited only the precursors to minds and feeling and thinking and consciousness but not those faculties themselves.

Missing was the ability to represent a resemblance of the objects and events of reality, both external to the organism and internal to it. The conditions for the world of images and minds to materialize began to emerge about half a billion years ago, and human minds appeared even more recently, possibly a mere few hundred thousand years.

The onset of early analogue-form representations permitted the rise of images based on varied sensory modalities and made way for feeling and consciousness. Later, symbolic representations came to include codes and grammars, and the way was clear for the languages of words and math. The worlds of image-based memory, imagination, reflection, inquiry, discernment, and creativity came next. Cultures were their prime manifestations.

Our current lives and their cultural objects and practices can be linked, albeit not easily, to the lives of yore, before there were feelings and subjectivity, before there were words and decisions. The connection between the two sets of phenomena travels in a complicated labyrinth where it is easy to make the wrong turn and get lost. Here and there one can find a guiding thread—Ariadne's thread, that is. The task of biology, psychology, and philosophy is to make the thread continuous.

It is often feared that greater knowledge of biology reduces complex, minded, and willful cultural life to automated, pre-mental life. I believe that is not the case. First, greater knowledge of biology actually achieves something spectacularly different: a deepening of the connection between cultures and the life process. Second, the wealth and originality of so many aspects of cultures are not reduced. Third, greater knowledge about life

and about the substrates and processes we share with other living beings does not diminish the biological distinctiveness of humans. It is worth repeating that the exceptional status of humans, over and above everything else they share with other creatures is not in question, and derives from the unique way in which their sufferings and their joys are amplified by individual and collective memories of the past and the imagination of a possible future. Increasing knowledge of biology, from molecules to systems, reinforces the humanist project.

It is also worth repeating that there is no conflict at all between accounts of current human behavior that favor autonomous cultural influence or the influence of natural selection conveyed genetically. Both influences play their parts, in different proportions and order.

Although this chapter is dedicated to reordering the emergence of abilities and faculties that can help us explain our humanity, I have used conventional biology and conventional evolutionary thinking to account for the unexpected strangeness of the revised course of events and for the phenomena that I am trying to explain less conventionally, such as mind, feeling, and consciousness. It is perhaps appropriate, in this context, to make two additional comments.

First, it is quite natural, under the sway of new and powerful scientific findings, to fall for premature certainties and interpretations that time will discard mercilessly. I am prepared to defend my current views on the biology of feelings, consciousness, and the roots of the cultural mind, but I am aware that those views may need to be revised before too long. Second, it is apparent that we can talk with some confidence about the traits and operations of living organisms and of their evolution and that we can locate the beginnings of the respective universe about thirteen billion years ago. We do not have, however, any satisfactory scientific account of the origins and meaning of the universe, in brief, no theory of everything that concerns us. This is a sobering reminder of how modest and tentative our efforts are and of how open we need to be as we confront what we do not know.

[Strength in Stillness: The Power of Transcendental Meditation](#) by Bob Roth [Simon & Schuster, 9781501161216]

A simple, practical, and straightforward guide to understanding Transcendental Meditation from world authority Bob Roth.

Oprah Winfrey and Jerry Seinfeld. Ray Dalio and Ellen DeGeneres. Gwyneth Paltrow and Howard Stern. Tom Hanks and Gisele Bündchen.

What do they have in common? The answer is a Transcendental Meditation teacher named Bob Roth, who has spent the past forty-five years helping many thousands of people access their innate creativity and power through this simple, nonreligious technique. Roth's students range from titans of business and the arts to federal prisoners, from war-scarred veterans to overworked moms and dads.

Medical experts agree that the epidemic of stress is damaging our physical and emotional health at younger and younger ages. While there is no one single cure, the Transcendental Meditation technique is a simple practice that dramatically changes how we respond to stress and life's challenges. With scientifically proven benefits—reduced stress and anxiety, and improved focus, sleep, resilience, creativity, and memory, to name a few—this five-thousand-year-old technique has a clear and direct impact on our very modern problems.

Once a skeptic, Roth trained under Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the twentieth century's foremost scientist of consciousness and meditation, and has since become one of the most experienced and sought-after meditation teachers in the world. In [Strength in Stillness](#), Roth breaks down the science behind Transcendental Meditation in a new, accessible way. He highlights the three distinct types of meditation—Focused Attention, Open Monitoring, and Self-Transcending—and showcases the evidence that the third, Self-Transcending, or Transcendental Meditation, is a uniquely accessible, effective, and efficient way to reduce stress, access inner power, and build resilience.

Free of gimmicks, mystical verbiage, and obscure theory, [Strength in Stillness](#) is a clear and practical guide to calming mind, body, and spirit.

Excerpt: Opening the Door for Stillness and Strength

For Tony Nader, M.D., Ph.D., the ravages of war were not something he saw in movies or read about

in books. He saw it first-hand. Born and raised in Lebanon, he attended medical school in Beirut during some of the bloodiest periods of the 15 year Lebanese Civil War. He earned his medical degree from American University there and then moved to the United States, where he attended MIT and earned a Ph.D. in brain and cognitive science. He also served as clinical and research fellow in neurology at the Massachusetts General Hospital—Harvard Medical School and the assistant director of the Clinical Research Center at MIT.

Dr. Nader first met Maharishi in 1979 at MIT. Over decades, a unique, trusted mentor-apprentice relationship developed. Before Maharishi passed in 2008, he asked Dr. Nader to oversee the entire global TM organization.

I was studying premed at American University in Beirut in 1975 at the start of the civil war. There were shootings and bombs; people getting kidnapped because of their religion. Sometimes, for months at a time, I couldn't travel from the university across the city to visit my parents because there was so much violence.

During those days, I was searching for meaning amidst the destruction, looking for a way to meditate. I tried a concentration technique for a little while and I also did some breathing exercises. But I didn't get anywhere. Then I heard about Transcendental Meditation from a friend and I decided to try it out. Right away, I experienced something I had been seeking for a long time: transcendence—a deep inner calm, a deep inner bliss, and a great expansion of awareness. It was tremendously satisfying. I had more energy and clarity to study better, to be more focused and accomplish more. Most important, TM helped me remain settled inside even though I was surrounded by fear and loss and violence. I opened a TM club at American University and I got my family and friends to learn to meditate as well.

Living in a war zone, I had a desire to understand exactly what happens in the minds of people that would make them want to fight. I specialized in psychiatry in medical school and that gave me some insight but not enough. I became a TM teacher after I completed medical school and then I entered a Ph.D. program in neuroscience at MIT. I wanted to better understand the science of TM and the brain so I could do more than just treat a

disease but really improve a person's health, really develop his or her creative potential. Not just in limited ways from the chemical-neurophysiological level, but from the unlimited level of the human mind as well. I conducted research on neurochemistry, neuroendocrinology, and the relationship between diet, age, and behavior and neurotransmitter and hormonal activity, and on the role of neurotransmitter precursors in medicine.

When I met Maharishi at MIT, it was the beginning of what I can best describe as an apprenticeship that lasted decades. I learned from Maharishi the deep connections between the ancient Vedic science of consciousness and the form and function of the human brain and physiology. I traveled all over the world and spoke with leaders in government, medicine, education, business, and defense about the science of consciousness. Over time, Maharishi gave me more and more responsibility for the knowledge and the administration of the global TM organization. It was nothing I ever imagined coming my way.

People often ask me about Maharishi. I think Maharishi's achievements speak best for who he was. I believe history will recognize Maharishi as the foremost scientist of consciousness, the one who revived the simplicity and naturalness of Transcendental Meditation. He opened the door for everyone—no matter his or her education, nationality, or religion—to experience real inner stillness, transcendence, and to develop real inner strength, higher states of consciousness. This has been Maharishi's great contribution to the field of science, to the study of human consciousness, and to life.

A reporter from the Associated Press was interviewing Maharishi for a feature story about the fiftieth anniversary of his TM organization back in June 2007. I had taught the reporter to meditate a few days before and had the opportunity to sit in on the conversation. After a series of almost perfunctory questions, the reporter asked Maharishi about his "overly optimistic view" of the impact of meditation on people suffering from a host of traumas and stress-related disorders. Such suffering had existed for centuries, the reporter said, and was not going away anytime soon. How, then, could Maharishi be so hopeful?

Maharishi thought for a minute, nodded, and said, "Darkness is just the absence of light. Turn on the light, and the darkness disappears. You can have a room that has been in darkness for one day, and you can have a room that has been in darkness for a thousand years. When you turn on a light in each room, the darkness disappears just as fast. Like that is the impact of Transcendental Meditation in the life of the individual and, by extension, the whole of society."

I am incredibly positive about what TM can do for you and for our larger world. Mainly because I have experienced it firsthand for nearly fifty years and because I have seen its dramatic impact in the lives of thousands of people I have personally taught, some of whom live in the darkest, most violent, most dire conditions imaginable.

Should you choose to learn to meditate, I offer my full support and the full support of every other TM teacher in the world as you begin this journey to experience and express the boundless reservoir of creativity and intelligence that lies within you. It's such a simple thing, but it's also incredibly powerful. Enjoy.

[Law and Literature](#) by Kieran Dolin [Cambridge Critical Concepts, Cambridge University Press, 9781108422819]

[Law and Literature](#) presents an authoritative, fresh and accessible new overview of the many ways in which law and literature interact. Written by a team of international experts, it provides a multi-focused history of literary studies' critical interest in ideas of law and justice. It examines the effects of law on writers and their work, ranging from classical tragedy to comics, and from East Africa to Elizabethan England. Over twenty chapters, contributors reveal the intricate and multivalent historical interactions between law and literature, both past and present, and trace the intellectual genesis of the concept of law in literary studies, focusing on major developments in the history of the interdisciplinary project of law and literature, as well as the changing ideas of law, and the cultural contests in which it has figured. [Law and Literature](#) will appeal to graduates and scholars working on the intersection between law and literature and in key related areas such as literature and human rights.

Excerpt: Questions of law and justice have long engaged the literary imagination. In Sophocles' *Antigone* a tragic dilemma confronts the heroine: If she buries the body of her brother Polynices in accordance with divine law, she disobeys a proclamation of King Creon forbidding that very act. Two millennia later, Ariel Dorfman's *Death and the Maiden* explores the procedures for redressing human rights violations after the overthrow of a dictatorship, as a torture victim subjects her torturer to an impromptu trial. In an after-dinner speech to the Canadian Bar Association in 1970, Northrop Frye explained this preoccupation by saying that "all respect for the law is a product of the social imagination, and the social imagination is what literature directly addresses." The vocabularies and methods of literary studies have changed since Frye spoke, but interest in the social functions of the imagination, and the ideological effects of literary works, has only grown. The practices of both law and literature converge around such fundamental issues as language and interpretation, the formation of subjectivity, and the connection of narrative and authority. The intersection of social ideology and poesis or linguistic creation became the focus of sustained interdisciplinary study through a dedicated law and literature movement in the 1980s. That movement has ramified, encountering new influences and taking new forms, but its key insight remains, as Ravit Reichman affirmed in 2009, that "the texts of law and literature jointly contribute to what legal scholar Robert Cover called a *nomos* or normative universe." The range and significance of this dialogue with legal history and philosophy makes law a vital element in contemporary critical discourse.

Introducing his 1961 anthology of legal prose, *The Law as Literature*, Louis Blom-Cooper wrote of "the harmony of law and literature." That view depended on a traditional understanding of literature and culture as "the best that has been thought and said in the world," and on an acceptance of the justice of the legal system; it offered a celebratory account of law and literature. Blom-Cooper's anthology and others like it remind us that legal writing and oratory are forms of rhetoric, compositions that seek to move their audiences toward particular understandings of events. They are exercises in a specifically legal imagination, articulating ideals and circumstances in

ways that recall literary texts. Among the examples selected are Gandhi's speech to the court in his 1922 trial for sedition and Albert Camus' *Reflections on the Guillotine*. In the same year as Blom-Cooper's anthology, Robert Bolt's celebrated play about the trial of Thomas More, *A Man for All Seasons*, was published, and the much-publicized trial regarding the publication of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* saw a more oppositional relationship between law and literature take shape. In this context, literary texts potentially transgress the boundaries of traditional morality and law. As is well known, a parade of distinguished literary critics gave evidence on behalf of the publisher, Penguin Books, testifying to the "literary merit" of Lawrence's novel, and helping the defense to success. Adding to the sense of an altered understanding of law in society was H. L. A. Hart's new work on jurisprudence, *The Concept of Law*. A number of general points may be drawn from this snapshot of cultural history, the first, and most obvious, being that literature as a field of writing is shaped by censorship laws and other legal regimes. As Nancy Paxton shows in Chapter 20 of this volume, such laws may function in constructive ways as well as setting limits to expression. Second, and more broadly, when viewed in the context of legal history, literary study may be seen as part of "the complex history of freedoms," as James Simpson puts it. Third, the relationship between law and literature is a close but shifting one, always significant, but ever open to revision from new social forces. Law, then, is one of the key interrelations of literature.

These events from a year chosen among many possible candidates are indicative of "the intricate and multivalent historical interactions" between literature and law.<sup>1</sup> This volume, through its twenty newly commissioned essays, attempts to reveal something of the range and intensity of those valencies. Part I offers an account of the origins of the interdisciplinary project of law and literature, and of how key theoretical shifts, especially poststructuralism, narrative theory, and historicist studies, reshaped the literary-critical study of law. Many of the concepts and arguments discussed in this foundational section of the volume are taken up independently in the later chapters. In the second and largest part of the book, Part II, a survey of the historical development of legal and literary intersections is presented in a series of chapters

devoted to major phases of literary history, from the classical era to the present. Each of these chapters offers a broad conspectus supplemented by a reading of key texts or takes a particular trial or idea as representative of larger legal-cultural formations. The risks of periodization are more than usually present in this context, with the ancient and medieval worlds represented by a chapter each, with some periods denominated by century and others by reign or cultural movement, in all of which the particular but representative conflicts and confluences must be tracked in two cultural domains. The collection ends by focusing in Part III on a number of applications of the dialogue between literary and legal studies that have practical effects in the contemporary system of law and the institution of literature. Accordingly, it includes chapters on such topics as laws that bear upon authorship and the freedom of representation, the cultural afterlives of trials, and narratives that enlarge the recognition of rights and civil wrongs by the courts.

The latter provide ready answers to the question of contemporary relevance, which is commonly raised in respect of humanities research by university administrators, governments, and others for whom the social utility of knowledge is equated with scientific advances. In this context it is worth noting a controversial review of law and literature as an interdisciplinary field by Julie Stone Peters. Peters argued that the field's practitioners, whether based in literary studies or law, tended to construct illusory images of the other discipline in order to remedy felt limits in their own: "literature's wounded sense of its insignificance, its inability to achieve some ever-imagined but ever-receding praxis; law's guilty sense of its collaborationism, its tainted complicity with the state apparatus." This strong critique led her to advocate for a broader interdisciplinary field of law, culture, and the humanities; however, her survey had omitted any consideration of historical studies of the changing relations between law and literature at different periods. It prompted robust defences of the law and literature project from Richard Weisberg, Peter Brooks, and Christine L. Krueger, among others. Krueger articulated a feminist account of gender advocacy in the literature and law of Victorian England that explicitly linked her historicist research to ongoing emancipatory movements in modern society, and that emphasis.

on "praxis" informs her account of historicist approaches to law and literature in Chapter 4. Critics working on law and literature scholarship will frequently draw out their implications for the present, sometimes explicitly, at other times leaving them to be inferred by readers." As this collection of essays adopts a broadly historicist approach to its subject, I suspect most of its contributors would subscribe in one form or other to a sense that the study of the past formations of law and literature will inform our understanding of present issues. Further, such studies may well be informed by the critic's interests, even as he or she attempts to elucidate the different beliefs, values, and intentions of the society being studied.

One benefit of the historical scope of a volume like this is that it affords what Robin Wharton calls in Chapter 18 "a long view" of the history of technologies of communication. Specifically, it enables readers to see the changing interfaces of law, language and society in oral, scribal, print, and digital cultures. This book therefore adopts a broad definition of literature that includes texts in the form of traditional songs from East Africa, forensic oratory, medieval homilies, judicial opinions, long-form television drama, and comics. In doing so, it attempts to encompass some ancient, postcolonial, or non-Western perspectives on law and justice as well as concepts from Europe and America. Equally, just as it has seemed essential to address both popular and elite cultural forms of past eras, so also it has seemed important in this volume to explore the effects of visual as well as print narrative media in the dissemination of concepts of law in contemporary culture.

Contributors to this volume are drawn from universities in several nations, including Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, Germany, Ireland, and the United States, and this relative diversity allows for a degree of variation in their critical methods and voices. An editorial recognition that "the field of law and literature research ... has become increasingly differentiated" — as Klaus Stierstorfer, the author of Chapter 1, put it in a review article on the field — seemed an important counterpoint to the volume's overall commitment to a historical account of legal-literary relations. Consequently, different approaches to the relationship between literature and the history of legal and social ideas will be found in the various

chapters: For example, Ioannis Ziogas reads the iconology of the body in the trial of Phryne through contemporary theories of sovereignty; Mark Fortier draws on intellectual history to produce a complex history of equity in early modern literature; Cheryl Nixon offers a feminist historical account of eighteenth-century fiction and the law of family; and Stephanie Jones brings poststructuralist and postcolonial concerns to the analysis of an East African case from the 1920s. This methodological pluralism aids in the discernment of those "constellations" of literary discourse and legal forms that help us to understand the past and shed light on current configurations of *nomos* in our own or other societies. Indeed, Benjamin speaks of the historian's work as "grasp[ing] the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one." Brook Thomas concludes his *Cross-Examinations of Law and Literature* by invoking these words. Such knowledge may assist in addressing the discrepancy "between reality and vision" in our normative worlds, and therefore Benjamin's description serves as an appropriate final note on which to introduce this collection.

## CONTENTS

Introduction by Kieran Dolin

### Part I. Origins:

- 1 The revival of legal humanism by Klaus Stierstorfer
- 2 Law meets critical theory by Peter Leman
- 3 Narrative and law by Cathrine O. Frank
- 4 Law and literature and history by Christine L. Krueger

### Part II. Development:

- 5 Law and literature in the ancient world by Ioannis Ziogas
- 6 The 'parallel evolutions' of medieval law and literature by Stephen Yeager
- 7 Literature and equity in early modern England by Mark Fortier
- 8 Gender, law and the birth of bourgeois civil society by Cheryl Nixon
- 9 Romanticism, Gothicism and law by Bridget Marshall
- 10 Strange cases in Victorian Britain by Kieran Dolin
- 11 Forming the nation in nineteenth-century America by Nan Goodman

- 12 Legal modernism by Rex Ferguson
- 13 Representing lawyers in contemporary American literature: the case of O. J. Simpson by Diana Shahinvar
- 14 Law in contemporary Anglophone literature by Eugene McNulty
- 15 Narrative and legal plurality in postcolonial nations: Chapter and verse from the East African Court of Appeal by Stephanie Jones

Part III. Applications:

- 16 Literary representations and social justice in an age of civil rights: Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Helle Porsdam
- 17 Trauma, narrative and literary or legal justice by Golnar Nabizadeh
- 18 The regulation of authorship: literary property and the aesthetics of resistance by Robin Wharton
- 19 Cases as cultural events: privacy, the Hossack Trial and Susan Glaspell's 'A Jury of Her Peers' by Marco Wan
- 20 Creativity and censorship laws: lessons from the 1920s by Nancy Paxson

[Thinking with Rousseau: From Machiavelli to Schmitt](#)  
by Helena Rosenblatt and Paul Schweigert  
[Cambridge University Press, 9781107105768]

Although indisputably one of the most important thinkers in the Western intellectual tradition, Rousseau's actual place within that tradition, and the legacy of his thought, remains hotly disputed. *Thinking with Rousseau* reconsiders his contribution to this tradition through a series of essays exploring the relationship between Rousseau and other 'great thinkers'. Ranging from 'Rousseau and Machiavelli' to 'Rousseau and Schmitt', this volume focuses on the kind of intricate work that intellectuals do when they read each other and grapple with one another's ideas. This approach is very helpful in explaining how old ideas are transformed and/or transmitted and new ones are generated. Rousseau himself was a master at appropriating the ideas of others, while simultaneously subverting them, and as

the essays in this volume vividly demonstrate, the resulting ambivalences and paradoxes in his thought were creatively mined by others.

Excerpt: Although indisputably one of the most important thinkers in the Western intellectual tradition, Rousseau's actual place in that tradition, and the legacy of his thought, remain hotly disputed. Was he the inventor of a radical form of democracy or was he, in fact, the progenitor of totalitarianism? Was he an individualist or a collectivist, a conservative or an apostle of revolution? The arguments on these questions show no signs of abating. And yet to a certain extent the discussion often remains on the level of generalities, where Rousseau's thought is broadly compared to a particular intellectual tradition ("republicanism," "liberalism," "socialism," "feminism," etc.) or examined with reference to a contested concept ("liberty," "the social contract," "the general will" or "modernity," etc.), with little attention to his often intricate and multidimensional relationship to individual thinkers.

The tercentenary of Rousseau's birth and the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of two of Rousseau's most influential writings, the *Social Contract* and the *Emile*, provided the perfect occasion to reconsider Rousseau's contributions to the Western intellectual tradition. On November 2-3, 2012, a conference was held on this topic at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. A distinguished group of scholars presented papers, each one exploring the relationship of Rousseau to another great thinker, from "Rousseau and Machiavelli" to "Rousseau and Schmitt." This approach, privileging dialogue, comparison, and reception through the pairing of individual thinkers proved most illuminating. In the end, we reasoned, it is the closest we can get to hearing an actual conversation between the great thinkers. And focusing on the kind of complicated work that intellectuals do when they read each other and grapple with each other's ideas is very helpful for explaining how old ideas are transformed and/or transmitted while new ones are created. Rousseau himself was a master at appropriating the ideas of others, while simultaneously subverting them, and as the papers in this volume show, the resulting ambivalences and paradoxes in solitude of the domestic sphere that women could engage in the serious work of authorship.

In chapter eight, Jonathan Israel sees the philosophical dispute that arose between Rousseau and the Baron d'Holbach as having especially important consequences during the French Revolution. Despite being on friendly terms initially, Rousseau eventually fell out with Holbach's circle (which included his friend Diderot). For Israel, this was more than a clash of personalities — the philosophies of Rousseau and Holbach were fundamentally incompatible, even though they made use of many related (if disputed) concepts, such as the general will. In particular, what divided the two men in Israel's eyes was Rousseau's emphasis on "the ordinary," personified in the person of Rousseau's lifelong companion, Thérèse Lavasseur. The divide between Rousseau and Holbach on this issue, Israel contends, was at the root of the conflicts during the radical phase of the French Revolution between the Montagnards and the Brissotins. For Israel, the philosophy of "the ordinary," as adapted by Robespierre, provided the ideological backbone of the Terror.

Although scholarship has tended to see Diderot, the radical materialist, and Rousseau, the sentimentalist, as diametrical opposites, Joanna Stalnaker's essay argues that there was an intellectual rapprochement between them during the last years of their lives. Although they never formally reconciled (or even saw each other), Stalnaker finds that each man was preoccupied with the same question in his final work: the failure of *philosophie* to provide an adequate account of man. In the end, both Rousseau and Diderot rejected the common eighteenth-century materialist convention that knowledge of man came solely from outside of the self. Instead, they believed that some account of the interiority of man was also necessary. Diderot came to this realization through his analysis of Helvétius's materialism, critiquing the author of *De l'homme* for reducing humanity to a series of animal impulses. In contrast, Rousseau approached the question by combining the anthropological accounts of his early writings with the autobiographical writings of his last years.

In chapter ten of this volume, Susan Shell's and Richard Velkley's contribution examines Rousseau's influence on Immanuel Kant. That Kant was a great admirer of Rousseau is widely known, but when it comes to influence scholars have tended to focus on Kant's indebtedness to Rousseau's notion of the

general will in the Social Contract. By contrast, Shell and Velkley examine Kant's crucial insight, no doubt acquired from reading Rousseau, that although human evil is self-inflicted, reason is also self-correcting. Kant also borrowed from Rousseau the idea that the proper education of male and female could lead to a full development of human faculties and to a moral transformation of the species, and that the key to this transformation is the relation between the sexes.

Chapter eleven turns to another influential reader of Rousseau, namely the English writer Mary Wollstonecraft. While many, including Wollstonecraft herself, have criticized Rousseau for his depiction of women in the fifth book of the *Emile*, Barbara Taylor argues that Wollstonecraft nonetheless saw herself in some ways as a disciple of Rousseau. In particular, Wollstonecraft found in Rousseau a fellow "Solitary Walker," one who in an age that emphasized sociability shunned society in favor of solitude.

In chapter twelve, Aurelian Craiutu highlights the continued dialogue between Rousseau and Germaine de Staël throughout the latter's writings, as she evolved from a youthful infatuation with Rousseau in her *Letters on Rousseau*, to a sophisticated critic of his in her mature political thought. Craiutu emphasizes two reasons for this shift in Staël's perspective — the misappropriations of Rousseau during the Terror that highlighted some of the shortcomings in his thought, and the growing influence on de Staël of her father, Jaques Necker, and the thinkers known as the Coppet Group. In tracing the evolution of Staël's engagement with Rousseau, Craiutu shows how the principle of political moderation emerged for Staël as a key corrective to the errors of Rousseau's theory of the social contract and modern democracy.

K. Steven Vincent's contribution focuses on the anarchist/socialist thinker Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's assessment of Rousseau's works. While Proudhon was a frequent commenter on Rousseau, Vincent argues that there were substantial differences between them, specifically in their views of human nature, in their discussions of property relations, and in their overall political programs. Despite these differences, however, Vincent sees the two united by a common desire to correct the ills of modern society, albeit in ways that, for both



thinkers, tended to emphasize their limited embrace of the deliberative elements of republican politics.

Jerrold Seigel's essay compares Rousseau and Marx as "theorists of human fulfillment," based on the observation that both were philosophical thinkers with a deep ambivalence about philosophy. Neither was an enemy of reason, even if Rousseau sometimes suggested he was, but both sought to embed their hopes in non-rational elements of human nature. Paradoxically, however, each one's program for doing this failed in some significant way, so that in the end both were fated to heighten the role of rational reflection in fulfilling human potential at the very points where they sought a way to diminish it.

In the final essay for the volume, David Bates compares the notion of the political in Schmitt's and Rousseau's thought. Bates identifies a number of similarities as well as some important differences. Although Schmitt read Rousseau attentively, Bates argues that he ultimately rejected Rousseau's concept of sovereignty and his related notion of the political. While Schmitt located the political in the so-called enemy-friend distinction, Rousseau grounded his in a rule of law meant to protect the freedom and equality of individuals. Noting that since 9/11 Schmitt's views have attracted much favorable attention in academic circles, Bates suggests that we have at least as much to learn from Rousseau.

#### Contents

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

List of Contributors

Acknowledgments

Introduction by Helena Rosenblatt and Paul Schweigert

1 Rousseau and Machiavelli: Two Interpretations of Republicanism by Maurizio Viroli

2 Rousseau and Montaigne: From Enthusiasm to Equanimity by James Miller

3 Rousseau and Hobbes: The Hobbesianism of Rousseau by Richard Tuck

4 Rousseau and Montesquieu by J. Kent Wright

5 Rousseau and Mendelssohn: "Enraptured Reason," Rousseau's Presence in Moses Mendelssohn's Thought by David Sorkin

6 Rousseau and Smith: On Sympathy as a First Principle by Pierre Force

7 Rousseau and A.L. Thomas by Anthony La Vopa

8 Rousseau and d'Holbach: The Revolutionary Implications of la philosophie anti-Thérésienne by Jonathan Israel

9 Rousseau and Diderot by Joanna Stalnaker

10 Rousseau and Kant: Rousseau's Kantian Legacy by Susan Shell and Richard Velkley  
11 Rousseau and Wollstonecraft: Solitary Walkers by Barbara Taylor

12 Rousseau and Madame de Staël: A Surprising Dialogue by Aurelian Craiutu

13 Rousseau and Proudhon: Human Nature, Property, and the Social Contract by K. Steven Vincent

14 Rousseau and Marx: On Human Fulfillment by Jerrold Seigel

15 Rousseau and Schmitt: Sovereigns and Dictators by David Bates

Bibliography

Index

[The Alchemists: Questioning our Faith in Courts as Democracy-Builders](#) by Tom Gerald Daly [Cambridge Studies in Constitutional Law, Cambridge University Press, 9781108417945]

Presenting a contrarian voice against a growing trend toward ever greater reliance on courts as democracy-builders, this book is aimed at a broad community of public lawyers, political scientists, and policymakers concerned with the role constitutional courts and regional human rights courts can play in developing democracy in post-authoritarian states.

Can courts really build democracy in a state emerging from authoritarian rule? This book presents a searching critique of the contemporary global model of democracy-building for post-authoritarian states, arguing that it places excessive reliance on courts. Since 1945, both constitutional courts and international human rights courts have been increasingly perceived as alchemists, capable of transmuting the base materials of a nascent democracy into the gold of

a functioning democratic system. By charting the development of this model, and critically analysing the evidence and claims for courts as democracy-builders, this book argues that the decades-long trend toward ever greater reliance on courts is based as much on faith as fact and can often be counter-productive. Offering a sustained corrective to unrealistic perceptions of courts as democracy-builders, the book points the way toward a much-needed rethinking of democracy-building models and a re-evaluation of how we employ courts in this role.

Advance praise: 'This extraordinarily timely work deals with a critical question for democratisation about the weight of the expectations placed on constitutional and human rights courts. The work is global in its focus, soundly based in fact, impeccably researched and convincingly argued. It will be a staple of the democratisation literature for some time to come.' Cheryl Saunders, Laureate Professor Emeritus, Melbourne Law School and Co-convenor of Constitution Transformation Network

Advance praise: 'Tom Gerald Daly's *The Alchemists* is an important contribution to the growing comparative constitutional law of democracy and takes the literature in exciting new directions. By examining in detail the 'democracy-building' jurisprudence of the Brazilian Supreme Court, and the complex interplay between regional human rights courts and national constitutional courts, especially in Latin America, *The Alchemists* raises a host of important questions and insights that will spark many scholarly conversations.' Sujit Choudhry, I. Michael Heyman Professor of Law, University of California, Berkeley and Founding Director, Center for Constitutional Transitions

Advance praise: 'The *Alchemists* is an important new book in the field of comparative constitutional studies, which poses a serious challenge to recent arguments in favour of constitutional courts as promoters or defenders of democracy. It highlights the danger, in this context, of high popular expectations of such courts, twinned with low court capacity. It also points to distinct dangers related to courts assuming an ambitious role in democratic transformation, such as via the enforcement of social rights, the danger of obfuscating underperformance in other key areas, distracting from core political struggles, and underplaying the centrality of political rights. In making these

arguments it also canvasses a broad and diverse range of jurisdictions. It is essential reading for anyone working or writing in the field of democratisation and comparative constitutionalism.' Rosalind Dixon, Professor of Law, University of New South Wales Faculty of Law

Advance praise: 'Comparative constitutionalists, political scientists, and policymakers have recently shown great faith in the work of courts in new democracies. Anchored by a rich case study of Brazil and drawing on a wide range of comparative evidence, *The Alchemists* is not only an important caution pushing back against this trend, but also provides a thoughtful map of the ways in which domestic and international courts might work towards a more achievable role conception. Scholars of courts and democratization processes will benefit immensely from grappling with Tom Gerald Daly's arguments.' David E. Landau, Mason Ladd Professor & Associate Dean for International Programs, Florida State University College of Law.

#### Excerpt: Our Court Obsession

As a young lawyer working for the Chief Justice of Ireland, I would visit his chambers almost every day - often multiple times a day. There, amidst the oak furniture, heavy curtains, and blizzard of court submissions was the unshakeable sense of judicial power; the sense of judgemade law in utero, to be birthed later in the more austere setting of the Supreme Court itself.

Having been the Chief Justice's chambers for almost a century, it took little imagination to picture the first Chief Justice of an independent Ireland in the 1920s, Hugh Kennedy, tackling his judicial duties under new constitutional arrangements that differed radically from the unentrenched British constitution under which all Irish lawyers had been trained. The Constitution of 1922 lay in the slipstream of more modern constitutions, with its separation of State powers, bill of rights, and, crucially, express conferral on the superior courts of the power to review ordinary law for compatibility with the Constitution. That power would be amplified under the new Constitution of 1937, adopted to sweep away most of the remaining constitutional vestiges of British rule.

It is a vanished world in which judicial power, though present, bore little relation to what we see

around the globe today.' Despite the authority placed in their hands, continuity with the British legal tradition remained the dominant theme for two generations of Irish judges, content to play a marginal role in governance by policing the boundaries of legality in the same way as their counterparts across the Irish Sea. They did not begin to exercise their ample powers with any vigour until the 1960s, when a new approach recast the Court in a more American mould, shrugging off the restraint of the British judicial style and placing the Court in a more assertive posture vis-à-vis the other branches of government.

By the time they did rouse themselves, independent Irish democracy was decades old and the judges of the Supreme Court had already started to enter a strange new world of shared constitutional supremacy with external courts. The principle in the 1937 Constitution that the Court's decisions 'shall in all cases be final and conclusive' had begun to unravel in the face of the first judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in 1960, delivered over 800 miles away in Strasbourg — in an action taken against Ireland, as it happens. Ireland's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 later required submission to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. Of course, the full effects were not to be felt for some decades.

For large swathes of the world today, the notion of the highest domestic court merely policing legality at the periphery, playing a marginal role in democracy-building and, in principle, having an irrefutably final say in all constitutional matters, no longer chimes with reality.

Indeed, even before the Supreme Court of Ireland had found its voice, the European landscape after 1945 had started to undergo a profound legal and cultural transformation, with the activity of constitutional courts in Germany and Italy initiating a paradigm shift toward a central role for such courts in democratic governance. The courts of mainland Europe had more pressing reasons than the Irish superior courts for flexing their muscles. Unlike the incremental Irish steps toward full independence in a democratic (albeit thinly democratic) setting, these courts seized their task in a context of discredited parliaments and a strong hangover from the corruption of democratic processes, which had led to authoritarian rule. In a relatively short time they came to be viewed as

anchors in an uncertain world, extolling the rule of law and adherence to constitutional values that voiced a stark reaction to the barbaric experiences of wartime and its immediate aftermath.

In the ensuing decades, constitutional courts and strong judicial review were established across the globe in states emerging from undemocratic rule: in Southern Europe, Latin America, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and Africa. This has led to a tendency to conflate assertive adjudication with successful democratisation processes; reflected in the contemporary calls for a new constitutional court to aid Sri Lanka's path back to democratic rule, and in Tunisia, the central position accorded to a new (though yet to be established) Constitutional Court in the democratic Constitution of 2014 adopted following the Jasmine Revolution that ousted dictatorial president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. At the international level, the intervention of regional human rights courts in young democracies has led to a multi-level judicial role in democracy-building, further enhancing the perception that courts have a central role to play in supporting and shaping democratisation processes: the elaboration of strong lines of jurisprudence by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights from the late 1980s in a regional context of democratising states; the sweeping expansion of the Strasbourg Court's territory in the 1990s to encompass Turkey and states emerging from Communist rule; and, most recently, robust decisions of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights since its first ruling in 2009.

### An Onerous Role for Courts as Democracy-Builders

This book seeks to question the development since 1945 of a global model of democracy-building for post-authoritarian states that places undue reliance on courts. In essence, instead of being viewed as epiphenomenal, constitutional courts and regional human rights courts' have come to be viewed as integral to the achievement of, or even constitutive of, a functioning democratic order. In other words, they are seen as central to successful democratisation. It is an onerous role, which differs significantly from the judicial role in long-established democracies (hereinafter, 'mature democracies'). In young democracies courts are required to somehow 'judge' democratisation. They are expected to both assess what is required to

support the democratisation process at any given point, especially in light of key deficiencies of the newly democratic order, and to judge when the democratisation context requires a different approach than may be appropriate in a mature democracy, such as the United States, Costa Rica, or Ireland.

The burden placed on courts tends to lead, at the extreme, to an expansion of the judicial role beyond the usual limits seen in mature democracies, and a blurring of the boundaries between judging law and judging democratic propriety. It also freights courts with weighty expectations to 'deliver' on the promises of a new democratic order, while navigating their own place in that developing order — or, in the case of regional human rights courts, inserting themselves into the democratisation process from without. However, the aim here is not merely to examine adjudication for its own sake. Rather, the effectiveness and viability of the global court-centric model for democracy-building, as it currently exists, is the overarching concern that drives this enquiry. This book, then, focuses on the evolving, interacting, and overlapping roles constitutional courts and regional human rights courts play in 'building' democracy, as distinct from the governance roles such courts play in a mature democracy. By examining what we think courts do as democracy-builders, what they actually do, and what they should do, it is argued that the decades-long trend toward ever greater reliance on courts is based on slim evidence and that a rebalancing of democracy-building models away from excessive reliance on courts is required.

### Origin of the Book and Key Questions

The germ of this book lay in the rather simple observation that the Supreme Court of Brazil and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights had taken divergent stances in 2010 on the validity of Brazil's Amnesty Law of 1979 — a core component of that state's transition to democratic rule in 1985. For the Supreme Court, the law was constitutional, as a valid catalyst for the democratic transition, and its amendment or repeal was a political question for the representative branches of government. By contrast, the Inter-American Court deemed the law invalid as enshrining continued impunity for serious human rights violations, contrary to the pan-regional American Convention on Human Rights (ACHR). The result on the ground

was something of a fudge: the law remains on the statute books, but the state complied with a central order of the Inter-American Court; namely, establishing a Truth Commission that facilitated an official and public discussion of human rights violations under the military dictatorship of 1964-1985.

Was the Supreme Court's approach correct, by batting the decision back to the elected branches of the state? Or was the Inter-American Court's approach preferable, not only in vindicating human rights in the instant case, but also in addressing the impunity 'bottleneck' in Brazil's democratisation process left by this legislative legacy of the democratic transition — one which the state, and Brazilian society more generally, had proven unwilling or unable to address?

This discussion could all too easily become fixated solely on the question of which court should have the 'final say' regarding key societal questions, or on general concerns as to the democratic legitimacy of courts of any stripe resolving questions that cut to the heart of the identity and foundations of a democratic political community. However, to focus exclusively on such questions would add little to an extremely well-trodden debate concerning the rise and legitimacy of judicial governance power in democratic states since the latter half of the twentieth century, which has become a 'central obsession' of constitutional scholars. In this book, a rather different set of questions raised by the Brazilian scenario is addressed. First, how have domestic constitutional courts and regional human rights courts become such central actors in post-war democratisation processes? Second, what roles do these courts actually play in democratisation processes, and how does the democratisation context shape their roles? Third, what roles should courts play to 'build' democracy in a post-authoritarian polity, as compared to a mature democracy?

### Global Resonance

Today these questions are of global resonance. In the decades since the establishment of constitutional courts in the defeated Axis powers of post-war Europe (Austria, Germany, and Italy) and the inauguration of a regional Court of Human Rights for Western Europe in 1959, the court-centric legal paradigm for supporting democratisation has spread worldwide.

In the various 'waves' of democratisation since 1945 a 'new constitutionalism', focused on transformative constitutional texts and expansive bills of rights, saw constitutional courts and strong judicial review become 'standard equipment' for states transitioning from Communist, military, and autocratic rule, across Europe, South America, Africa, and East Asia, with the perceived democratisation successes of post-war European courts exerting a strong influence.<sup>9</sup> Regional human rights

courts, in turn, have been established in two other world regions: the Americas and Africa. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights is perceived as having played a key role in democratisation processes across Latin America since the late 1980s. A democratisation role was conferred on the European Court of Human Rights with the enlargement of the Council of Europe in the 1990s to include Turkey and the new democracies of the post-Communist world in Central and Eastern Europe. Since its first merits judgment in 2013, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights has taken a strident approach in cases concerning non-inclusive electoral arrangements, free speech, and fair trial (albeit not in a context of sweeping regional democratisation). An Arab Court of Human Rights is reportedly close to establishment, and there are growing calls for an Asian Court of Human Rights.

The focus on courts as key actors in new democracies shows no sign of abating, in scholarship or practice. For instance, at a conference in 2014 on constitutional reforms in the Middle East and North Africa — bringing together judges, constitutional lawyers, and political activists from across the region, as well as international experts — discussion of legal mechanisms for enhancing rights protection and supporting nascent or potential democratisation processes in Arab states was dominated by courts. Delegates debated the promise and perils of domestic courts and the recently announced Arab Court of Human Rights as democratic or undemocratic institutions, as well as a formal Tunisian proposal to the UN General Assembly for the establishment of an International Constitutional Court, to issue decisions on mass rights violations, the holding of elections, and serious violations of international law principles related to democracy! Even sessions specifically

devoted to non-judicial mechanisms persistently returned to talk of judicial review, as though on a loop.

In Tunisia, the one potentially viable democracy to emerge from the Arab Spring, a new Constitutional Court endowed with an array of powers, though yet to be established, is viewed as 'the centerpiece of the Tunisian legal order.' Beyond the Arab region, courts are centre stage in contemporary democracy-building processes across the globe, such as those in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Kenya, and Zimbabwe. At the international level, a chorus of scholars and policy-makers supports the establishment of human rights courts in the remaining world regions (Asia and the Pacific), or even a World Court of Human Rights.

Thus, the promise of domestic constitutional courts and regional human rights courts as democracy-builders now forms a *fil rouge* connecting post-authoritarian states across the globe. These courts represent a central 'democratisation technology' in the minds of many scholars and in the toolkit of domestic and international constitution-makers and law-makers.

## The Distinct Role of Courts in New Democracies

What is distinctive about the roles of these courts in new democracies, compared to their functions in mature democracies? A central claim of this book is that the democratisation context alters courts' roles, and changes our perspective on familiar questions concerning the legitimate roles courts can play in democratic governance, for five principal reasons.

First, in new democracies strong judicial review, which accords the final say on constitutional matters to the courts, often forms a fundamental component of the political bargain underpinning the very transition to democratic rule. It is thus viewed, not as an option, but as a prerequisite for the democratic project. Second, a new democracy is paradigmatically underpinned by a new or substantially revised constitution (or a new constitutional understanding) and a significant residue of authoritarian-era laws, which requires the courts to engage in wholesale constitutional construction while remaking ordinary law in the democratic image of the constitution. This differs starkly from the general constitutional 'fine-tuning' role of a court in a mature democracy. Third,

submission to the jurisdiction of a regional human rights court is often viewed as a symbolic act underscoring a commitment to democratic rule, as well as a useful adjunct to support nascent domestic institutions. Fourth, the relationship between the courts at each level is itself shaped by the trajectory and vicissitudes of the democratisation process, with regional adjudication, designed as a 'back-up' system, tending to assume more prominence either through adherence by domestic courts to regional case-law, or where domestic adjudication is deemed lacking — whether due to the unwillingness or incapacity of the domestic constitutional court to engage in robust decision-making. Finally, in new democracies the capacity of other actors in the democratic order to play their part in democracy-building is limited, in a context where multiparty politics is often nascent or stifled by dominance of a single party, civil society is weak, and citizens are unschooled in democratic deliberation and the wielding of political power.

These reasons all point to some justification for strong judicial review as a necessary component of successful democracy-building, although they do not address the extent to which courts should assume central roles in democratisation processes, nor the true nature of their adjudicatory function in such processes. In the sense of 'judging' democratisation, we are faced with the crucial question of when the specific demands of supporting or navigating the democratisation process justify a court's taking a more assertive or more deferential approach than might be appropriate in the context of a mature democracy. Whether we can trust courts to carry out such a difficult task, what happens when the courts at each level disagree, and whether we can trust other state organs in new democracies, or even the people, to carry more of the 'democratisation burden' apportioned to courts under the post-war model are all vital questions. This book focuses on the first two questions, but with the other questions in mind.

### Gaps in the Literature

The key questions set out above are not systematically addressed in existing scholarship on the role of constitutional courts and regional human rights courts in democratisation processes, which is scattered across a wide array of distinct but overlapping research fields. These generally consist of a shared terrain between two key disciplines,

political science and law. On even a short roll-call are legal theory, political philosophy, constitutional theory, comparative constitutional law, law and politics, judicial politics, democratisation studies, transitional justice, and international human rights law.

The core scholarship here is a small number of region-specific analyses of the roles played by constitutional courts in new democracies, including Wojciech Sadurski, Jan Zielonka, and Kim Lane Scheppele on Central and Eastern Europe; Roberto Gargarella, Siri Gloppen, Gretchen Helmke, and Irwin Stotzky on Latin America (and, to a lesser extent, Africa); Theunis Roux and Magnus Killander on Africa; and Tom Ginsburg on East Asia. Others, such as Samuel Issacharoff, Andrew Harding, Peter Leyland, Daniel Bonilla Maldonado, Diana Kapiszewski, Oscar Vilhena Vieira, and Upendra Baxi provide cross-regional comparisons of constitutional courts. Important scholarship using specific country case-studies (e.g. Russia, Argentina, Indonesia) has also been developed by authors including Nancy Maveety, Rebecca Bill Chavez, and Marcus Mietzner.

Analysis of the specific roles played by regional human rights courts in new democracies remains rare. Europe is the principal focus, with three main works on the European Court of Human Rights: an edited collection by the transitional justice scholars Michael Hamilton and Antoine Buyse; a monograph by the transitional justice scholar James Sweeney; and a co-authored work by Christopher McCrudden and Brendan O'Leary focusing on the European Court's widely criticised judgment in *Sejdic and Finci v. Bosnia and Herzegovina*, which found aspects of the Bosnian consociational political system to be incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Literature on the Inter-American Court of Human Rights is modest, but recent groundbreaking comparative work by Alexandra Huneus has provided greater understanding of the democracy-building roles of both the European and Inter-American courts. Analysis of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights remains scant, given that its first merits judgment was not issued until 2013.

Despite providing significant insights into the roles of courts in the post-war model for judicialised democratisation, these roles as yet remain unclear

and far from fully understood. The existing scholarship suffers from five central deficiencies.

First, existing scholarship does not engage sufficiently with the foundational concept of democratisation itself, in terms of what it really means, and when it starts and ends. This is essential to any discussion of how we view courts' roles in this process. Second, there is a tendency to focus on single-country case-studies, and an inordinate focus on a small number of empirical contexts (e.g. South Africa, Hungary, Columbia). Third, the literature fails to capture the very particular context of adjudication in a new democracy, and how this context shapes not only how the courts approach their adjudicative role, but also objective justifications for a role that differs from that of courts in mature democracies. Fourth, in the majority of the literature, produced largely by political scientists, and by lawyers using political science methodologies, the unique nature of courts as legal institutions is easily obscured. The

primary focus tends to be on judicial behaviour and strategy, using game theory, rational choice institutionalism, and other behavioural methodologies. This provides useful insights, but often fails to fully capture the nature of adjudication in a new democracy, and tends to privilege the outcome and impact of judgments over their content. We are left with an incomplete picture, which fails to appreciate the impact of doctrinal development and contestation within courts on the roles they assume as democracy-builders.

Fifth, and perhaps more importantly, there is a stark divide between a vast literature on domestic constitutional courts in new democracies and a much smaller literature on the impact of regional human rights courts on such states. Analysis of courts at the domestic level does not integrate the role of courts at the regional level, or vice versa, with the result that their interaction in the context of democratisation is never fully explored and remains under-conceptualized. In addition, existing scholarship fails to capture, more generally, the multiple and overlapping systemic interaction between courts and non-judicial sites of constitutional authority across the domestic and regional levels, and how this raises a complex scenario of 'variable geometry' where assertive

action at any one site has ramifications for the roles carried out by the other actors.

This glaring gap reflects the fact that the relevant literature as a whole is contained in discrete silos. There is little connection or communication between specific fields of scholarship that analyse different aspects of the roles of courts in new democracies. In particular, as we will see, normative arguments concerning the roles that courts should play in supporting democratisation processes often engage to a limited extent not only with the core debate on the judicial role in mature democracies, but also, more importantly, with other normative arguments focused on the role of courts as democracy-builders. To a certain extent, this fragmentation is due to the differing preoccupations of scholars, addressing different questions to those in this book.

### What the Book Aims to Achieve

Evidently, no monograph can attempt to fully address all of the deficiencies in the literature described above. This project does not aim to fully answer all of these questions, but to ask the right questions; questions that are not addressed systematically in the existing literature.

The main aim of the book is to make a meaningful contribution to existing normative debates concerning the proper roles of courts as democracy-builders, which considers the strengths and limits of the court-centric post-war model of democratisation, integrates the role of regional courts, and is more mindful of the strengths and weaknesses of adjudication at the domestic and regional levels. In order to do so, it provides a historical account of the development of the judicialised post-war model of democratisation; constructs a conceptual and analytical framework that is heuristically useful for exploring what is distinctive about the democratisation context and the role of courts in that context; and seeks to reveal the 'real world' nature of adjudication in the democratisation context at both the domestic and regional levels.

The Brazilian scenario briefly discussed at the start of this introduction remains at the heart of the book, but it is used to illuminate the post-war global model of court-centric democratisation as a whole. To do so, the book traces the origins of the post-war template for adjudication as a component of successful democratisation to the experience of

post-1945 West Germany, and its global spread through the various post-war waves of democratisation across the world, which from the 1980s onwards began to include regional human rights courts as well as domestic constitutional courts. The book underscores the different roles played by the courts at each level, by conceptualising these roles in a general sense, applying this conceptual framework to examine the roles of the Brazilian Supreme Court and the Inter-American Court in Brazil's democratisation process, and placing these roles in a regional and inter-regional comparative perspective. By placing the inter-court contestation concerning Brazil's amnesty law within a much wider historical, regional, and global context, we get a sense of not only how courts in new democracies worldwide have come to be perceived as such central actors to successful democratisation processes, but also their limits in this regard and the democratic difficulties raised by their centrality.

### Why Brazil?

As well as providing a useful example of a lack of harmony between the domestic constitutional court and the regional human rights court, Brazil has been chosen as the core case-study of the book for three additional reasons.

First, the Brazilian experience of democracy-building after the transition to democracy in 1985 has been understudied compared to states that transitioned to democracy in the post-Cold War period from 1989 onward (e.g. Hungary, South Africa), especially as regards analysis of relevant domestic and regional case-law.

Second, is the peculiar institutional form of the Supreme Federal Court: in the constitutional reform culminating in the 1988 Constitution, reformers considered — but ultimately eschewed — the creation of a 'European-style' constitutional court with exclusive powers of constitutional review. Yet, they embraced such a radical overhaul of the Court's jurisdiction, and the structure of the judiciary as a whole, that it was left looking more like a constitutional court closer to the European model than a classic American-style Supreme Court (although its work continued to be dominated by appeals). In this one court, then, we get two advantages: an institution that has faced the challenge of navigating the different roles of both types of court; and an excellent example of the

post-war shift toward an ever greater burden on the constitutional court in a new democracy as an engine of democratisation.

Third, although many constitutional courts allow dissenting opinions, the Brazilian court's case-law is particularly revealing given that its adjudication takes place through a public *seriatim* procedure where judges provide their 'votes' in open court on the basis of a draft judgment by a *rapporteur-judge*, without having previously deliberated together to find common ground. It therefore provides an interesting window into naked intra-Court contestation concerning democratisation and the Court's proper role as a democracy-builder.

### A Few Caveats

A number of caveats are warranted regarding the scope and orientation of this project. While the book proceeds from the premise that the roles of courts at both levels in democratisation processes has often been exaggerated, this is not to suggest that courts are merely epiphenomenal in democratisation processes. It is recognised that courts can play a significant role and can have a crucial impact at critical junctures in the democratisation process.

It is also recognised that to some extent the role of courts in 'building democracy' is a perennial. John Hart Ely's theory of judicial review in his seminal 1981 work *Democracy and Distrust*, for instance, argued that the US Supreme Court's core role should be to reinforce democratic governance by ensuring broad participation in electoral and decision-making processes and fair representation of all (including minorities) by those elected. However, the focus here is not on courts reinforcing democratic governance in Western states that enjoyed a slow march toward democracy, such as the United States or the United Kingdom, but remains at all times on the trend since the 1970s in particular to expect courts to act as central engines of a more rapid democratisation process in the first decades of a post-authoritarian polity.

It is also acknowledged that other courts could be considered democracy-builders; for example, national courts besides constitutional courts, or international courts such as the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) or the International Criminal Court (ICC). However, this book confines its focus to constitutional courts and regional human rights



courts, which have generally been presented as the central judicial democracy-builders in both scholarship and policymaking.

In addition, the book does not directly focus on the very specific case of the European Court of Justice (ECJ)'s role in enhancing the democratic credentials of the EU (e.g. by strengthening the powers of the European Parliament), on the basis that the EU and ECJ are entirely European phenomena that have not been replicated, and are unlikely to be replicated, elsewhere.

Nor do I view it as a 'rights' study, in the sense that it does not analyse the role of courts exclusively through the lens of human rights; rather, it takes a structural approach that places emphasis on the need to achieve structural stability and a level of organisational functioning in a new democracy, which provides a wider analytical framework for assessing democracy-building. That said, it is fully recognised here that a core ultimate aim of successful democratisation is to improve rights protection as a whole in a society emerging from authoritarian rule, given that debasement of rights is a hallmark of such rule.

In addition, the book does not deal at any length with issues such as judicial selection and judicial independence, which are addressed in detail in other works. The book also does not focus on post-conflict contexts, although much of its content may have some relevance to those contexts. While the temporal scope of the book may appear extremely long, covering some seventy years, the heart of the study concerns a time-span running from the late 1980s, when the European and Inter-American human rights courts began to operate in earnest, and the global spread of constitutional courts had started to become manifest.

Finally, it may appear odd that a book arguing against excessive focus on courts is itself centred on courts. However, there is a real need to anatomise and better understand this 'court obsession' before we can move to considering how to address and rebalance it. This book therefore dwells for the most part on the first task, only moving at the very end to considering how we might begin to approach rebalancing our current court-centric democracy-building models. Evidently, it would be impossible to do full justice to the second task in the course of one book.

## Interlocutors

To whom is this book addressed? Despite its cross-cutting approach, perhaps the most natural home for the book is in the 'big tent' of law and politics, in the corner occupied by studies of the judicial role in democratic governance. It is therefore primarily aimed at adding to existing analyses by scholars such as Alec Stone Sweet, Samuel Issacharoff, Kim Lane Scheppele, Ariel Dulitzky, Anne-Marie Slaughter, David Landau, Rosalind Dixon, Denis Galligan, Karen Alter, Martin Shapiro, Roberto Gargarella, Alexandra Huneus, Nico Krisch, Tom Ginsburg, Ran Hirschl, Nina Binder, James Sweeney, and Christopher McCrudden, among others.

There are a variety of 'entry points' to the book, whether one is interested in law and development, the interface between domestic and international law, 'judicial dialogue', post-national governance, the democratic legitimacy of strong judicial review, comparative judicial review, comparative constitutional law, or the spread of regional human rights courts. More widely, it is hoped that the study may be of use to policy-makers and organisations involved in legal reform in existing and future democratising states, as they are currently operating without any systematic account of the potential, operation, limits, and drawbacks of constitutional courts and regional human rights courts, and the interaction between such courts. Such an account is sorely needed if they are to make recommendations that fully appreciate the complexity of these courts' relationships to both successful democratisation and good governance.

## Structure, Arguments, and Conceptual Framework

The book contains seven substantive chapters. Chapter 1 explores the concept of democratisation as the first step in sketching an analytical framework for examining the role of courts as democracy-builders. The chapter seeks to explain what is distinctive about democratisation, including how we define it, what temporal markers it contains, and when it might be said to end. It addresses the relationship between democratisation theory and the conceptual frameworks provided by transitional justice theory and social justice, and explains why the former framework is preferred in this book, as avoiding the terminological and conceptual confusion rife in

the literature, and permitting the sequence of events typical of democratisation to be more precisely located. This allows the activity of courts to be related to, and viewed within, the overall context of democratisation. The chapter then constructs an analytical framework fundamentally based on a reading of democratisation theory (and, in particular, the sub-concept of 'democratic consolidation'), but refined through an exploration of the relationship between democratisation and two other key concepts: democracy and constitutionalism, at both the domestic and regional levels. Chapters 2 and 3, which address constitutional courts and regional human rights courts respectively, narrate the development of the global model of court-centric democratisation, and the widespread perception of courts as central to democratisation processes. It is argued that the model, and the perceptions underpinning it, find their roots in a novel form of constitutional adjudication pioneered by the Federal Constitutional Court of Germany from 1951 onward, and a perception of that court as central to West Germany's successful return to full democratic governance by the 1970s. It is contended that this led not only to constitutional courts assuming prominence in constitution-making for subsequent new democracies, but also paved the way for meaningful adjudication by regional human rights courts, with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights as the quintessential 'democratisation court' at this level. Both chapters challenge the perception of the power of courts to drive democratisation as based on unsound premises, tending to elide the propitious context for democratisation in Western European states of the immediate post-war period (particularly Germany), tending to place unrealistic expectations on courts in regional contexts outside Western Europe, which have not enjoyed the same advantages, and often overstating the impact and capacities of regional human rights courts as democracy-builders.

Having challenged the often unrealistic perceptions of courts as democracy-builders in Chapters 2 and 3, Chapter 4 seeks to explore in more depth the roles that constitutional courts and regional human rights courts play in 'democratic consolidation', as defined in Chapter 1. The aim of the chapter is to conceptualise the different but intersecting roles that the domestic and regional courts play, emphasising that the significant particularities of

the context of a new democracy, compared to a mature democracy, fundamentally shape the roles assumed by the courts. The chapter first conceptualises the roles of constitutional and regional human rights courts separately, asserting that the former act as primary sites of normativity embedded within a single democratisation context, whereas the latter act as secondary sites of normativity, external to any particular democratisation context, which can assume primacy where the domestic courts are perceived as failing to provide sufficient rights protection. This discussion is then refined through a fuller conceptualisation of the interaction between the courts at each level, challenging and adding nuance to the common presentation of the courts as partners in a coherent system of adjudication.

Chapters 5 and 6, which concern domestic and international adjudication respectively, apply the conceptual framework set out in Chapter 4 to a comparative analysis of the Brazilian scenario discussed at the start of this Introduction, in order to achieve a finer-grained picture of the texture and nature of 'democratisation jurisprudence' at each level based on empirical evidence. These chapters first explore the different impacts of the Supreme Court of Brazil and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on Brazil's democratisation process and the implications of the conflictual relationship between the two courts for other actors in the democratic order. In the latter half of Chapter 6 the Brazilian context is compared to the wider regional and global contexts, through significant comparison to the African and European contexts, which shows the extent to which it exemplifies, and departs from, the post-war model of court-centric democracy-building.

Based on the empirical data and conceptual framework built up in the first six chapters, Chapter 7 explores normative debates concerning the appropriate role for courts as democracy-builders, contrasting these with the 'core' debate on the role of courts in a mature democratic order. The chapter critically reviews the existing normative stances as generally failing to integrate adjudication at the regional level, often talking past one another, and having insufficient regard for concerns regarding democratic legitimacy. The chapter then presents a normative position that departs in key ways from existing positions, particularly by integrating

regional human rights courts. First, it makes an argument for how existing courts might operate more effectively separately, and as a system, to support democratisation. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it tentatively begins to explore a range of constitutional design options for the future that may improve the capacity of courts to act effectively as democracy-builders, arguing for a rebalancing of the existing democracy-building model for post-authoritarian societies away from excessive reliance on courts.

Finally, the 'concluding thoughts' at the end engage in a spot of future-gazing, asking whether the court-centric model of democratisation will persist into the future, or whether it is already ceding to a new paradigm.

In January 2037, after years of escalating internecine power struggles in the Politburo Standing Committee and the wider Communist Party, growing Uighur and Tibetan unrest, two decades of sputtering economic growth, a severe four-year clampdown on citizens' liberties, and, finally, a mass state-wide pro-democracy movement sparked by Hong Kong's Statue Square protests of 2029, the People's Republic of China held the first full, free, and fair elections in its history.

At that point in time, twenty years from today, will the current court-centric paradigm still be our model for supporting this nascent democratisation process? Will we be advocating a thick constitution that seeks to constitute the new democracy with all the trappings of the rule of law, an extensive bill of rights including rafts of justiciable social and economic rights, and comprehensive provisions concerning how the new democratic order should function? Will we be proposing that a new constitutional court (or a repurposed Supreme People's Court) will act as the centrepiece of this new democratic order, capable of guarding its coherence and delivering on its promises? If an Asian Court of Human Rights has been established, as various scholars desire, will we be promoting it to the new democracy as a back-up system? Will we continue to claim that, together, these courts will bind the authoritarian Gulliver with ropes, and lead the Chinese state to a brighter democratic future?

We cannot know the answers to these questions. However, all signs indicate that the ground is

already shifting beneath our feet. If the hallmark of governance in the late modern period was the wresting of power from monarchs by (increasingly) representative parliaments, and the twentieth century was marked by the transfer of significant governance power from parliaments to courts, the twenty-first century may yet see the pendulum swing back to a less central role for courts, as their limits as democracy-builders become more widely acknowledged.

Various signs point to the need for a new model for democracy-building: the backlash against the court-centric model in states worldwide; worrying levels of democratic decay in highly judicialised democracy-building projects (e.g. in Hungary, Brazil, South Africa); enduring resistance to robust adjudication in Africa and Asia; the uncertainties of the newer democratic projects in Tunisia and Sri Lanka, and the way they are challenging our 'democratisation toolkit'; and the emergence of new non-judicial democratisation technologies, including international democratic charters and a form of 'constitutional review' by intergovernmental think tanks, such as the Venice Commission.

As urged in the final chapter of this book, we must begin to seriously consider the enduring viability of our current thinking on courts as central institutions for democracy-building, and how we can move to a model, or perhaps multiple models, for sharing the democracy-building burden more evenly. Courts will remain key institutions in any attempt to build democracy on the ashes of an authoritarian regime, but we need to move beyond a model in which courts and judicial review are touted as the first solution to any challenge encountered or expected in this endeavour. That fuller discussion is, however, for another time and place.

[The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity 2<sup>nd</sup> edition](#) edited by Robert Frodeman and Julie Thompson Klein [Oxford Handbooks, Oxford University Press, 9780198733522]

Interdisciplinarity has become as important outside academia as within. Academics, policy makers, and the general public seek insights to help organize the vast amounts of knowledge being produced, both within research and at all levels of education. The second edition of [The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity](#) offers a thorough update of this major reference work, summarizing the latest

advances within the field of inter- and transdisciplinarity. The collection is distinguished by its breadth of coverage, with chapters written by leading experts from multiple networks and organizations. The volume is edited by respected interdisciplinary scholars and supported by a prestigious advisory board to ensure the highest quality and breadth of coverage.

#### [The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity](#)

provides a synoptic overview of the current state of interdisciplinary research, education, administration and management, and of problem solving-knowledge that spans the disciplines and interdisciplinary fields. The volume negotiates the space between the academic community and society at large. Offering the most broad-based account of inter- and transdisciplinarity to date, its 47 chapters provide a snapshot of the state of knowledge integration as interdisciplinarity approaches its century mark. This second edition expands its coverage to discuss the emergence of new fields, the increase of interdisciplinary approaches within traditional disciplines and professions, new integrative approaches to education and training, the widening international presence of interdisciplinarity, its increased support in funding agencies and science-policy bodies, and the formation of several new international associations associated with interdisciplinarity.

This reference book will be a valuable addition to academic libraries worldwide, important reading for members of the sciences, social sciences, and humanities engaged in interdisciplinary research and education, and helpful for administrators and policy makers seeking to improve the use of knowledge in society.

Excerpt: The Future of Interdisciplinarity: An Introduction To The 2nd Edition by Robert Frodeman

As a simple fact, interdisciplinarity responds to the failure of expertise to live up to its own hype. — Fuller and Collier

It might seem odd to begin the [Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity](#) with the question of whether interdisciplinarity has a future. For both individually and as a whole, the 46 chapters that follow illustrate the utility of the concept as well as its importance in prompting innovation in both research and pedagogy. On the other hand, some

clarity concerning the goals of the field, as well as the overall goals of this book, would be helpful. I speak for myself rather than my fellow editors or authors; but given the fraught nature of conversations surrounding the term, the varied and even contradictory meanings assigned to it, and its sometimes function as an empty honorific, an exploration of the future prospects of interdisciplinarity seems worth some attention.

The issue is in part one of definition. But here we have to define definition. It could mean the demarcation of interdisciplinarity in comparison with its cognate terms—disciplinarity, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinarity—as well as the swarm of other phrases that pass in and out of usage (antidisciplinarity, meta- and infradisciplinarity, cross-disciplinarity, etc.). Julie Thompson Klein's chapter in this volume does an admirable job of making sense of these terms, and there is no point in replicating that effort. I have in mind something else: the way in which ambiguities in the meaning of key terms have functioned within the political economy of knowledge—and whether those ambiguities have now outlived their usefulness.

Several of the subsequent chapters touch on related themes. Carl Mitcham and Wang Nan's chapter examines the inter- and transdisciplinary nature of ethics (whereas the focus here is on the ethics and politics of interdisciplinarity). Anne Balsamo's chapter addresses the ethics of interdisciplinary research via an Aristotelian account of what she calls interdisciplinary shift work. Steve Fuller's chapter on the military-industrial stimulus to interdisciplinarity recognizes that we have been too ready to dismiss outside influences on the academy as neoliberal "interference." Michael O'Rourke's chapter reviews ongoing debates about the nature (or existence) of an interdisciplinary method. Playing off of these accounts, my focus is on what can be broadly called the rhetorical dimensions of interdisciplinarity.

Both "interdisciplinarity" and "transdisciplinarity" have functioned as boundary objects that have had different meanings at different times and for different groups. Interdisciplinarity is most commonly used as a portmanteau word for all more-than-disciplinary approaches to knowledge, with the overall implication of increased societal

relevance. This is how it is used in the title of this volume, even though the term more specifically refers to the intra-academic integration of different types of disciplinary knowledge. Similarly, transdisciplinarity has often referred to Hegelian-like syntheses of all knowledge—again, an academic goal—although today it is more commonly used to designate knowledge that is coproduced, where academics work with nonacademic actors of one type or another. (This has also been called Mode 2 knowledge.)

These ambiguities have served a strategic function. In both cases they have allowed academics to gesture toward conducting research that's more relevant than "normal" disciplinary knowledge, while avoiding the painful task of actually working with people outside the academy. If this sounds critical of the community of interdisciplinarians, it is a criticism that applies here as well as to others. In part, this failure is simply a matter of the deformation professionnelle that all academics are prone to: our tendency to get caught up in inside-baseball debates. But there is more at work here than that.

We should not romanticize the matter: Working with nonacademics can be arduous. In fact, the topic has an ancient pedigree: The question of public engagement, and its various difficulties, is a dominant theme of Plato's work. The fate of his mentor illustrates the dangers of public engagement—that is, of seeking to be relevant. In response to Socrates's judicial murder, Plato developed the dialogue form as a means for safely and artfully presenting controversial ideas. Plato, after all, never appears in the dialogues; his beliefs have to be sussed out from the exchanges between different speakers. His reliance on the dialogue form suggests that Plato believed that a philosophical rhetoric was as crucial to thinking as any particular epistemic account of things. It is through skillful rhetoric, after all, that ideas come alive within a community. Of course, "rhetoric" is usually taken as "manipulative speech"; but for Plato (and Aristotle) rhetoric was concerned with the question of how to make sure that audiences truly "get" what is at stake.

On this account, then, interdisciplinarity consists of not only the study of how to integrate various kinds of disciplinary knowledge—call this the epistemic task—but just as much the analysis of the

challenges surrounding effective communication to different audiences—call this the political and rhetorical element. While exceptions abound, the latter has been neglected within accounts of interdisciplinarity.

Beyond deformation professionnelle, the incentives and disincentives of academic culture have led interdisciplinarians away from philosophical rhetoric and toward a preoccupation with epistemology—or as it appears in the literature, "method." It is a case of disciplinary capture: Researchers on interdisciplinarity mean to increase the relevance of academic work, but over time the community becomes insular, and recreates the accoutrements of disciplinary culture—a recondite vocabulary, a canon, a closed group, conferences, and journals. Some movement in this direction is appropriate; but too much becomes what Fuller calls "epistemic rent-seeking." (While in her chapter for this volume Bammer argues that the disciplining of interdisciplinarity is precisely what is called for.)

The problem arises when the need for epistemic bona fides within one's own reference community overwhelms attention to the larger dimensions of interdisciplinarity. Rhetorical issues such as timeliness, an eye for the main point, and a commitment to the needs of a specific audience, while important to interdisciplinarians, lack the intellectual excitement of debates among the cognoscenti. Similarly, political questions, such as who speaks and who gets listened to, and how authority is distributed among the participants in a conversation, get marginalized. As a prominent interdisciplinarian once put it to me, while discussing whether policy makers and user groups should be involved in a conference on interdisciplinarity we were planning: "Nah—we'd have to dumb things down."

Policy makers are not dumber than academics; but they are less in tune with in-group epistemological niceties. Of course, this (the dominant) approach to interdisciplinarity views itself as concerned with practical needs, but it does so via a tacit embrace of a disciplinary model of dissemination where insights are first worked out by experts. These insights then trickle down to the "lay" public without much (inter) active engagement. Abstract principles of a methodology are offered with less attention given to working things out on the fly, in media res. The implicit message is that the experts remain in

charge. Put differently, interdisciplinarity has functioned at a distance from the field of policy studies, whose concerns are fundamentally rhetorical in nature, focused on the uptake of academic knowledge by the larger world. Put differently again, interdisciplinarians have a tendency to abandon their status as thinkers of the "in-between" and to join the ranks of the specialists.

Now, too much can be made of this contrast between method and rhetoric. Of course, there is a "method" to one's rhetoric; otherwise it is just ad Jibbing. But in contrasting a focus on interdisciplinary method with the need for a philosophical rhetoric I want to highlight the importance of something closer to improvisational comedy or jazz. While the jazz musician comes armed with knowledge (of, e.g., chord progressions), the real business occurs while rifling with others. A rhetorically sensitive interdisciplinarity begins with the needs and perspective of a specific audience in a particular context, armed with a toolbox of approaches that can be tweaked as needed. This contrasts with a top-down, methodological attitude that develops a set of principles which are then programmatically applied to different situations. If done right, one's interlocutors sees no "method" at all.

But if these ambiguities have served multiple purposes and audiences—providing the appearance of responsiveness on the one side, professional legitimacy and the pleasures of tenure on the other—one wonders whether their usefulness may be coming to an end. We may have reached peak interdisciplinarity.

Treat this analogy advisedly, for just as with "peak oil," it may turn out to be an often predicted but never-quite-reached point of decline.

Interdisciplinarity may yet become central to the transformation of the twenty-first-century university. Note, however, that people outside of universities already rely on a different vocabulary. Politicians and citizens speak of impact, or accountability, or relevance. It is worth asking what difference it will make if talk of "interdisciplinarity" shifts toward conversations centered on one or another of these terms—how it will affect the range of goals that universities are organized around, as well as who is in charge of the conversation.

In terms of remaining in charge, don't bet on the academics. The cluster of terms just mentioned already represents a countermovement that, while sharing some of the intuitions surrounding interdisciplinarity, has its own distinct imperatives. It is also backed by the power of the vote and the public purse. The changed landscape I speak of does not only mean the increasing influence of corporate models for the university. More fundamental—and less susceptible to shifts in political ideology—is the growing role of knowledge processes throughout society, driven by the ongoing revolution in information and communication technology. The result may have become a cliché—the "knowledge society"—but that does not make the point any less portentous.

These processes are leading to the displacement of the university from the center of knowledge production. The ubiquity of knowledge—Google in our pocket—raises the value of knowledge while at the same time lessening the distinctiveness of what occurs within what we once called the ivory tower. Thus Google today, to stay with this example, has approximately as many PhDs in its employ (~2000) as does Stanford. Now, universities remain conspicuous places for both the production (research) and consumption (education) of knowledge, and they may continue to be so in the future. But until very recently they were not merely conspicuous; they were singular, a role they have filled across various institutional permutations since the eleventh century. Students today have to be reminded that in the days before the Internet (1990!) one had to actually travel to a particular place (a library) to acquire what was then called "book learning." No longer: Knowledge production has gone rogue. Nor is the point limited to the ubiquity of the Internet: There is now more knowledge produced outside the academy than within it. In 2013 the top 10 companies in terms of research expenditures, from Volkswagen to Merck, spent more than 100 billion USD on research (Casey & Hackett 2014). By comparison, the budget of the US National Science Foundation in 2013 was \$6.9 billion; the European Commission's Horizon 2020 averages around 11 billion euros a year from 2014 to 2020; and the 2014 budget of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, the largest national research organization in Europe, was 2.8 billion euros.

These trends suggest that interdisciplinarity, as the totem of academic innovation, must embrace a different set of projects if it is to remain relevant across the next decades. The most pressing need is for an examination of the changing role of the university within society in an age of ubiquitous knowledge. Ironically, while interdisciplinarians criticize disciplinarity for a piecemeal approach to knowledge, they have not taken up the task of thinking through the function of the university as a whole. One way to frame this need is in terms of critical university studies (Williams 2016). For Williams, this implies an account of "the corporatization of American higher education over the past three decades." Fair enough: There are any number of indices, such as the rise of a contingent academic labor force (e.g., adjuncts) that support this point. But while neoliberalism represents a genuine challenge to academia—certainly among the distinctive aspects of the university are those elements that cannot be reduced to a paying basis—even more basic questions press themselves on us. What are the distinctive elements of the university that should remain viable in the future? What elements can be dispensed with, and which should be added? The STEM disciplines readily make arguments concerning their practical (that is, economic) efficacy, but the humanities have mostly failed in this regard. Can the humanities—especially at public universities—refashion themselves for an era focused on "impact?"

Ironically, given the wholesale attacks directed their way, the humanities may constitute the central feature of the twenty-first-century research university. Humanists are partially at fault here: They have been signal in their failure to provide an undated account of the impact of philosophy and of the humanities on society. The point should not be that difficult to make in an era when cultural products, creativity, style, and cultural imagination constitute so much of both the business and political worlds. But if an account of the impact of the humanities is needed, just as pressing is the need to develop a philosophy of impact. Questions of impact receive a great deal of attention within policy studies, but it is remarkable how little attention humanists, professors generally, and universities have given to the topic.

Still the disciplinary division of labor remains paramount: Academic work remains piecemeal, even in those areas (i.e., the humanities) which used to claim with Hegel that "the truth is the whole." Thus a Google search for "institute/center for the future of the university" returns no hits; the same with attempts to locate academic programs devoted to the future of the university. Of course, these are only indices; and as noted above, institutionalizing the nascent field of critical university studies presents its own problems in terms of disciplinary capture. There is still a crying need for a Manhattan Project-level effort to understand the place of the university within the ecology of twenty-first-century knowledge production and use.

What, then, is the problem that interdisciplinarity seeks to solve? I suggest it is one of politics, democracy, and technocracy. Interdisciplinarity is the bridge between academic sophists and the rest of society. "Sophist," of course, has come down to us as a term of disapprobation, but disciplinarians are by definition sophists, that is, people who are experts, who "know things." This is well and good, as long as we understand the limits (both political and epistemic) of expertise. But it does highlight the need for a class of thinkers who are adept at questioning rather than only providing answers, at opening up conversations, and at practicing the translational and transactional skills needed to connect the disciplinary sophistry to the community. To say it again, the point of interdisciplinarity is fundamentally rhetorical in nature: to figure out how to relate disciplinary expertise to the needs of the community while protecting the academic from undue harm.

By "undue harm" I mean the need to insulate academics from the negative consequences of speaking truth to power. Tenure has its problems, but its main one is that academics too rarely do anything that would demand its protections. On the other hand, the professorate should be justly held accountable when it does not recognize its dual loyalties—to the community that supports them (like Hegel, most of us are employed by the state) as well as to their disciplinary community. Academics, humanists included, are obliged to work on issues that connect up with the interests of the general public—though of course they do not owe that public the answers they desire.

As noted above, these questions were first identified by Plato. In the scholarly literature it has come down to us as "the relation of the philosopher to the polis." But put the point in contemporary terms: Society now demands greater accountability in return for its support of the academy. How are we to translate disciplinary knowledge into particular circumstances? What step-down functions do we have? Do we need disciplines to protect academics and/or to solve problems? And how do we at least partially sequester ourselves from simply becoming, or becoming seen as, one more political actor?

In sum, interdisciplinarity constitutes an implicit philosophy of knowledge—not simply an epistemology, but a general reflection on whether and to what degree knowledge can help us achieve the perennial goal of living the good life. It is a contemporary expression of a very old question.

Essay:

## Conceptual Framework of The Concept of the Individual

Since the objective of this book is to study the meaning of the concept of the individual in the way of thinking of Shi'i Muslims, it is an indispensable task to explain and define this concept as it appears in this work.

Comparing the category of the person in different societies, Marcel Mauss concludes that, although 'there has never existed a human being who has not been aware, not only of his body, but also at the same time of his individuality, both spiritual and physical', there has not existed a universal conception of self common to all peoples of the world. Peoples of different cultures in different ages have rather developed their own awareness of self. However, to have a sense of self does not necessarily indicate the existence of 'the category of self' among a people. Both Mauss and his successor Louis Dumont, who conceive the concept of the individual as a social concept of a unique and indivisible unity, argue that if the awareness of self can be regarded as universal the 'category of self' and 'the cult of the self' are peculiar to Western culture.

Moreover the history of ideas in the West demonstrates, according to Mauss, a constant transition of the notion of the self, from a simple masquerade to the mask, from a 'role' (personnage) to a 'person' (personne), to a name, to an individual; from the latter to a being possessing metaphysical and moral value; from a moral consciousness to a sacred being; from the latter to a fundamental form of thought and action.

Hence, what according to Mauss is regarded as 'la personne morale' and according to Dumont as 'the individual' is, as we will see later, a result of a historical process from antiquity to Christianity and from there to modern times. The Western view of the individual, in contrast to other views of man, not only grants a human being a moral value, but also gives him a political and juridical significance.

According to this view it is individuals, as autonomous entities with certain economic, political and legal rights, who constitute a society. The individual, here, is conceived in terms of a 'place in a system of social relations' and society is considered in terms of a compound of 'individualist individuals', or the individuals who have internalized a certain concept of the person, a concept according to which each individual is in the last instance more important than any larger constituent group. The individual, as found primarily in modern Western civilization, is defined as 'the independent, autonomous and thus (essentially) nonsocial moral being', 'the rational being' who is 'the normative subject of institutions'. This is the definition of the individual to which we adhere in this book.

### The Term Conformity

The term conformity can be used in two senses. In the conventional sense conformity implies a tendency towards similarity and identification with a model: conformity is here submission to an established system of norms and obedience to laws merely because they are laws. In the second sense, the one we use in this work, conformity is an antipole to individualism. It does not denote similarity to a system of norms, it is rather the crystallization of the idea of being unified with a greater entity in the social relationships of individuals.' In the field of social interaction conformity characterizes the relationships of persons whose identity is not individualized. With individualized identity we mean, as Taylor



explains, 'one that is to me, and that I discover in myself. This notion arises along with an ideal, that of being true to myself and my own way of being. And so, conformity is, in the sense we apply it, not the consequence of a conscious choice but of having internalized certain premises which, while excluding any dichotomy between the whole and the parts, regards individuals as entities subordinated to the whole and the whole as nothing but the crystallization of the individuals in their real undivided nature.

Where conformity prevails, what is 'considered as essential to full being' is, Taylor maintains, 'being in touch with some source — for example, God, of the idea of the good'. In individualistic society, on the other hand, the source the individual should connect with is deep within him. This being the case, what distinguishes social relationships characterizes the relations of individuals who out of their free will or through manipulation relinquish a part of their rights as individuals and integrate into a greater entity to increase the possibility of ameliorating their living conditions or to realize their social or political ideals. As an instance, we can refer to tendencies towards collectivism in socialist or nationalist theories which, although they valorize the social whole, do not neglect the human individual. It is even suggested that both socialism and nationalism are in some degree based on individualistic consciousness of members of society. In this respect, it should be emphasized that although the domination of collectivism in a society, in some extreme cases, can lead to based on conformity from those based on collectivity is that in the latter individuality as a concept is not called into question. Collectivity 'difference-blindness', it hardly negates the individualized identity of individuals or forces them to be resolved in a homogeneous mass the way conformity does.

### The Notion of Way of Thinking

When studying the concept of the individual we should take into account two dimensions of the individual, namely the individual as a man and the individual as a social entity. Since there are different approaches to these two dimensions, the concept of the individual can also be understood in different ways. When it comes to the individual as a man, different views of the cosmos, i.e. of understanding the cosmos as an indivisible totality or composed of distinctive and autonomous

particles, give rise to different interpretations of man. On the other hand, dealing with the social dimension of the individual leads to divergent approaches to the concept of the individual regarding his position in different social realms such as economy, politics, law.

Since it is not the objective of this book to study the individual as such, but rather the significance of the concept of the individual in a specific culture — the Iranian — dealing with all the above-mentioned approaches lies beyond the scope of our work. Accordingly, a limitation to our field of study is required. In this respect we have to answer the following questions. Is it possible to attribute to each culture its own specific concept of man? In other words, are philosophical concepts of man as many as there are cultures? Or are there, rather, some universal world-views based on which the concept of man in each culture has taken form? In the following we try, by answering these questions, to define our conceptual framework. As the history of ideas witnesses, all over the world the intelligent human being has always been in quest for knowledge about himself.

He wants to find out from where he is coming, what the reason for his being is, what is going to happen to him, and what relation he should the cosmos. To find out man's place in the cosmos has, therefore, been the main concern of the Chinese Confucian as well as of the Indian Hindu, the Egyptian diviner or the Greek philosopher. With the great world religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the approach has centered on the problem of Creation, that is, the meaning of and the reason for the Creation of the cosmos. Each of these religions, by including some older ideas or philosophies, developed its own view — although in certain respects like each other — of the macrocosm and its relation to the microcosm, or man. In this way, a certain view about the cosmos resulted in certain approaches to the concept of man. Examining different approaches to the concept of man shows that this concept is tied to certain understandings of the relations between God and world (including man).

On this basis, we believe that in studying the concept of man in a specific society, we can proceed from the dominant theological and/or philosophical world-views in the society in question. We employ the term 'system of thought' — as it is

used by some researchers — when referring to these world-views. In this respect, one can classify a set of different societies with a common 'world religion' based on a certain system of thought. The term 'world religion' signifies here, as Weber defines it, 'religiously determined systems of life-regulation'. Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are considered as the six important 'world religions'. Societies characterized by one or other of these are assumed to share basic views on the main ontological and epistemological questions. No doubt this should not be understood as a people's mind or spirit, terms which can hardly be defined scientifically.

Here it must be mentioned that in no way do we maintain that a 'system of thought' can come into existence merely based on a universal religion, nor are we of the opinion that all existing societies necessarily developed a certain 'system of thought'. What we have in mind is that religious world-views have had an enormous impact on the formation of the concept of man and consequently on the way a people conceive of themselves as 'individuals'.

Obviously, this classification based on the 'system of thought' is not absolute. We could very well classify societies that philosophically belong to a specific system of thought in other ways — in relation to their economic or political system, or according to their other characteristics. For example, a society like Japan, which philosophically belongs to the system of thought of Buddhism, can by its economy be classified together with most European societies which belong to the system of thought of Christianity; or an African society ruled by a socialist government but belonging to the Islamic system of thought can politically be classified together with China or Cuba.

However, if the system of thought makes the skeleton in the intellectual body of a society, the culture makes its flesh and gives it a face. In fact, belonging to a certain system of thought does not prevent a society from developing its own culture distinguished from other cultures sharing the same system of thought. For example, Buddhism, with its basic universal principle which transcends the distinction of nations, is a philosophical phenomenon common to most East Asian cultures. But by

reference to the history of Buddhism, it may be shown that this religion has been adapted and modified by recipient nations according to features peculiar to their ways of thinking. In this respect, although Buddhism provides East Asian cultures with a common structure for their approaches to the concept of man, this common structure, when meeting different ways of thinking of Eastern peoples, appears in divergent forms, sometimes even in direct opposition to each other. For instance, the study of some social scientists like H. Nakamura shows that while Indian Buddhism has a metaphysical character and an inclination to abstraction, Chinese thought is characterized by a lack of awareness of universals and an emphasis on particulars. Another example is the ultra-nationalism of the Japanese, which has probably no counterpart among other East Asian peoples.

Similarly, as we will see later, its belonging to the Islamic system of thought does not imply that Iranian culture is identical with other Islamic cultures. This being the case, we have to consider the special characteristics of Iranian culture and, in doing this, we must make use of the concept of 'way of thinking'. Thus, if the concept of 'system of thought' is a tool by means of which we can relate Iranian society to a greater and more general context, then 'way of thinking' is another tool for distinguishing Iranian culture from other cultures belonging to the same system of thought. 'Way of thinking', in general, comprises the ways in which people make value judgements and practical decisions, classify their experiences and establish relationships with their surroundings, etc. As Hajime Nakamura, in his book *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples*, writes:

'The phrase 'ways of thinking' refers to any individual's thinking in which the characteristic features of the thinking habits of the culture to which he belongs are revealed.'

Bearing in mind the preceding discussion, we can now return to our initial question, 'can a specific concept of man be attributed to each culture?', followed by the question 'are there some universal worldviews based on which the view of man in each culture has taken form?' By reference to what has been discussed so far, we can answer in the following way: there are certain universal world-views that provide each culture with a basic structure for the concept of man. This basic structure

can be regarded as a skeleton embodied by the way of thinking specific to each culture. In other words, the way of thinking embraces the empirical aspects of the life of a people, such as mythology, proverbs, folklore, etc. It is, indeed, the way of

Identity according to K. Magnusson		
	Subjective	Objective
Individual	View of oneself as a unique individual distinguished from others	Specific constellation of roles and biographical characteristics
Social	View of oneself as a member in different categories, i.e. what one	Set of roles and other social categories has in common with others

thinking that gives the philosophical concept of man a social and concrete character. Thus, it is a question of different levels: the system of thought takes up the concept of man on a more general and philosophical level, while the way of thinking manifests this on a sociocultural level.

### The Concept of Identity

Identity is an unclear concept that, due to its manifold signification, has been discussed from different points of view. Considering issues such as personal integrity, cultural heritage, ethnicity and so on, scholars belonging to divergent disciplines have dealt with the concept of identity on several levels and from different perspectives.

One might define the concept of identity on two levels, namely, the personal level and the social level. Furthermore, on each level, one might distinguish between an objective aspect — externally designated — and a subjective one — subjectively recognized.

Objective identity refers to the identity ascribed to an individual by another. In this case, the individual is either defined and categorized because of what others believe to be his characteristics (objective personal identity) or with regard to the characteristics of certain social groups to which he is

ascribed membership by others (objective social identity).

When an individual ascribes to himself certain attributes, or when he recognizes the categorization of himself as a member of a social group, we are faced with the subjective identity. In this case, the former definition refers to the subjective personal identity, while the latter signifies the subjective social identity. Kjell Magnusson's distinction between the different levels and aspects of the conception of identity is shown in Table below.

It hardly needs to be mentioned that there is a connection between the concept of identity and the concept of self-consciousness. In fact, both levels of identity, i.e. the personal and the social levels, presuppose a certain degree of self-consciousness. In this respect, in the process of the formation of self-consciousness, the concept of 'other' plays a central role. Table 1.1

The role of the 'other' can be seen from both a subjective and an objective perspective. Seen from the subjective perspective, 'other' is an indispensable factor for the very existence of one's consciousness as self-consciousness. Since the self is the object of its own cognition — an object — its objectivity is not real. For self is, itself, the subject of this relation. Therefore, to obtain external validity, this consciousness must objectify itself in the 'other'. Accordingly, self-apprehension of the one is realized through 'the other'. Therefore, although there are various definitions of both personal and social identity that are sometimes in direct contrast to each other, in almost all one can see the important role of the 'other'. In this respect, E.H. Erikson, who is undoubtedly among the pioneers of research on identity, has drawn attention to the fact that one of the most important features of one's consciousness about oneself is one's awareness that one's identity is recognized by others.

This being the case, on the personal level, to define oneself, one must be aware of one's own individual characteristics as someone distinguished from others. On the social level, self-consciousness is based on the recognition of those factors that relate the individual to the group. Here, the emphasis is laid on sameness, rather than on distinctiveness. This reveals the twofold nature of the concept of identity, which, on the one hand,

stresses 'distance' and, on the other hand, also puts an emphasis on 'similarity'.

Summing up these considerations, we agree with Erikson in his definition of identity, which comprises both these aspects:

The term 'identity' expresses such a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others ... Here, the term 'identity' points to an individual's links with the unique values, fostered by a unique history, of his people.

## Identity and Culture

If it is true that an individual's identity is tied to those unique values that are promoted and shared during the history of his people, then one should not overlook the role of culture in the construction of the identity of the individual. Culture, here, refers to something that is 'learned, shared and transmitted within any interacting collectivity of people'. As Anita Jacobson-Widding writes:

Culture connotes commonly held values and the outward expressions of these values. In so far as these values concern the moral universe of the self in relation to the alter, they are vital to the construction of an image of the self. Although the cornerstones by which a personal identity is constructed are to be found in the person's previous experiences of face-to-face interaction, the interpretation of these experiences is possible only by reference to those values that form his moral and cultural universe.

Culture is not only the basis of a system of values and beliefs. It is also the basis of the individual's preferences in his daily life. In each given society, 'what a person likes or dislikes, the quite intimate and personal preferences which constitute his essential distinctiveness as an individual, his identities are cultural rather than individual issues. Thus, culture is an essential part of the social environment in which an individual finds himself. The identity of the individual is, therefore, constructed through his interactions within his sociocultural environment. At the same time, the objectification individual gains their validity from a value system legitimized by the culture in question. In this way, culture becomes the basis for the construction of the

individual's social as well as personal identity of individuals' beliefs and feelings in a culture contributes to the creation of social identity (as externally designated, or, objective social identity). Those criteria according to which others identify the foundation of the concept of the individual in western thought.

The objective of this part is to elucidate the concept of man in the ways of thinking of Iranians by studying the relationships of man to God in Persian Sufism. We will attempt to show the importance of the domination of mystical thought upon the non-development of the concept of the individual in Iranian ways of thinking. Still more important in this context is an explanation of how the Sufi doctrine of the *Unity of Existence*, which brought about ideas of supremacy of the Universal Self over the individual self and of the complete identification of the individual human self with God, has been an obstacle to development of the concept of the individual in Iranian thought. This, then, is in stark contrast to the dualistic conception of the world in Western ways of thinking which led to the emergence of the concept of the individual.

When studying the concept of man as an individual, an inquiry into ideas that deal with metaphysical and theological conceptions of man is essential. As Parsons maintains, man's position in the world and his orientation towards it are legitimized by 'what Weber called the theological meanings of man's conceptions of himself and his place in the universe'. It is these conceptions that also provide a meaning to man's diverse goals. One crucial issue essential for the formation of metaphysical and theological conceptions of man of himself is then concerned with the way man conceives his relation to a transcendental Being. In Weber's analysis of the impact of men's conceptions of Divinity on their social relationships we can read between the lines to what extent the concept of man as an individual owes its development to the way the relation of man to God is understood by Christianity.

A brief study of the history of philosophy shows that the development of the notion of man has been, at least until modern times, due to theology. The decisive role of the Christian theological conception of man in the further development of the notion of man in the framework of modern philosophy, psychology and sociology is too well known to need repetition here. Even as the social

sciences gained the main place in the study of the human being and his social behavior, the importance of the theological conception in understanding the notion of man was hardly called into question. It is enough to draw attention to the role that sociological or anthropological studies of the religions of different peoples have played in understanding the 'meaning' of the divergent forms of human behavior and motivations, or to the importance of metaphysical and theological conceptions in philosophical and analytical psychology.

All that has been said above is well known, and we recall it only for the sake of a remark on the importance of the God—man relationship when studying the development of the concept of the individual. In our study, the necessity of inquiring into the theological conceptions of man's relationship with the universe (including himself) is more acute. In the Western world, the separation of philosophy from theology and the advent of the social sciences provided the possibility of studying the concept of man from points of view other than the theological one, but in the Islamic world this concept remained within the theological realm. Here, we will try to show to what extent the Occidental dualistic view has contributed to the emergence of the concept of man as an individual. Before proceeding with this, however, it is necessary to make some further remarks.

First, when studying the impact of the dualistic view on the growth of concern for the individual self in Western ways of thinking we introduce an 'ideal type', that is, an isolated picture of some aspects of reality. Accordingly, when referring to the existence of a duality between body and soul in Christianity, we do not maintain that such a dualistic conception is the only or authentic one. What we have in mind is rather the existence of such a dualism in the prevalent understanding of this religion, which is incorporated into Western thought. Thus, in this book we mean by Christianity this main current, unless stated otherwise.

Second, while we consider dualism in Occidental thought as one of the important factors to have contributed to the development of the concept of the individual, this does not mean that we see the whole of the Western history of philosophy as a history of dualism. No doubt there are non-dualistic trends in Western philosophy. For instance, one can

refer to Spinoza, who promoted ideas like the idea of the unity of existence. Nonetheless, proceeding from the study of certain researchers such as Dumont, Mauss, Durand and so on, whose studies embrace the concept of the individual in both traditional and modern societies, we confine ourselves to an inquiry of the dualistic view as one of the significant views prevailing in Western ways of thinking, which as such has played an important role in the development of the concept of the individual.

In this regard, we will study briefly first the impact of the dualistic view of Greek thought on Christianity with respect to the conception of man, then examine the post-Christian period regarding the Occidental dualistic view. Our efforts, in this regard, will also be directed at expressing the role of the dualistic view in the emergence of man as an individual.

Limitations of space have forced us to sacrifice depth and/or breadth in this chapter. Although this brief introduction to the dualistic aspect of Occidental thought does not do justice to the richness of Occidental philosophy, it does help us to pinpoint the essential difference between Iranian and Western conceptions of man, respectively. Attention to this difference, which can be formulated within the framework of the dichotomy of the idea of the duality of existence versus the idea of the unity of existence, helps us fulfil the major task of investigating the concept of the individual in a non-Western society like Iran.

### Dualism and the Development of The Concept of the Individual: The Impact of Greek Thought on Western Ways of Thinking

A study of Greek mythology reveals the human characteristics of the Greek gods. These gods had not only human shapes but also human psychological characteristics. Their weaknesses and powers as well as their relationships with humans and among themselves all give the impression of human nature. Zeus, god of the gods, loves, hates and feels jealous. His seven daughters, too, who each symbolize one kind of art or vocation, have human sentiments. The fight between Zeus and Heracles over the fate of Prometheus resembles the fight between two human beings. Having in mind the human characteristics of Greek gods, Jean

Pierre Vernant in his study of *'aspects de la personne dans la religion grecque'* writes:

*Pour un Grec, Zeus est en rapport avec les diverses formes de la souveraineté, du pouvoir sur autrui; avec certaines attitudes et comportements humains: respect des suppliants et des étrangers, contrat, serment, mariage ...*

[For a Greek, Zeus is connected with the various forms of sovereignty, of power over others; With certain human attitudes and behaviors: respect for supplicants and foreigners, contract, oath, marriage ...]

Accordingly, in ancient Greek religion we are not facing eternal and omnipotent gods, but rather gods whose distinction from humans lies in their supernatural bodily power, which is used exactly as if it belonged to a human being. Correspondingly, the distance between the human world and the world of the gods is not a spiritual distance between this world and the world beyond, but a physical one. The gods' place is somewhere in the Olympian mountains, far away from human territory.

That being the case, it is not surprising if the relationship between man and gods in ancient Greek religion is analogous to that of two this-worldly powers fighting for dominance over the world. Whereas gods aim to take the destiny of men in their hands, men try to make themselves free and even to replace gods. Take, for example, the theft of fire by Prometheus. This evoked the anger of Zeus, who tried to deny humans access to fire, which was considered the source of knowledge and power and could enable men to take the place of gods. This story and others, such as the creation of Pandora, the first woman, who 'brought all the evil upon mankind which Zeus had planned', indicate that the relations between the Greek gods and humans were not those between the lover and the beloved or the worshipper and the worshipped, but those between rivals.

Another significant point concerning the relations between man and gods in Greek mythology is that the fate of man is not supposed to lie in the hands of the gods, but in the hands of man himself. The importance of heroic acts in Greek mythology is the result of the belief that, despite the power of gods over man, man's fate is determined by his own deeds. As Vernant maintains:

*Ce qui le définit, au sein même de son destin d'homme, ce sont les actes qu'il a osé entreprendre et qu'il a pu réussir ses exploits. L'exploit héroïque condense toutes les vertus, et tous les dangers, de l'action humaine ... Il semble donc bien que les Grecs ont exprimé, sous la forme de l' 'héroïque', des problèmes liés à l'action humaine et à son insertion dans l'ordre du monde.*

[What defines him, in the very heart of his destiny as a man, are the acts he has dared to undertake and that he has succeeded in his exploits. The heroic exploit condenses all the virtues and all the dangers of human action. It thus seems that the Greeks expressed, in the form of the "heroic", problems related to human action And its insertion into the world order.]

Finding himself alone and threatened by supernatural powers, man, who did not expect any mercy from the gods, had nothing but his physical abilities as means of freedom and power. The result was nothing but the discovery of the internal dimension of the subject and the increase of the sense of responsibility, which together led to the growth of concern for the individual self in Greek thought. Michel Foucault has paid great attention to the discovery of 'personne' in antiquity. As Wilhelm Schmid mentions, Foucault discovered

*lisant les textes de l'antiquité, que le 'connais-toi toi-même' dépendait de l'impératif de 's'occuper à soi-même'; et que la philosophie antique était toujours préoccupée des techniques de soi.*

The significant point here is not only the existence of the concept of personality in Greek thought, but, as Foucault maintains, the existence of the idea of 'souci de soi' — or the cultivation of the self — in addition to the injunction of 'connais toi-même' — or 'know thyself'. In other words, for the Greek the cognition of self is tied to the care of the self and accordingly to 'former soi-même'. These injunctions focus on not only the realization of man but his self-creation. Man is asked not only to understand himself — as he is commanded by many religions — but to change himself. Here it should be borne in mind that the injunctions of 'souci de soi' and 'former soi-même' require the consciousness of being an individual, which presupposes the individual's relation to himself.

The existence of a kind of 'individualism' in ancient societies should not, however, obscure the fact that in these societies there existed a strong system of social relationships. When talking about individualism we must, as Foucault reminds us, distinguish between three attitudes:

- (1) the individualistic attitude, characterized by the absolute value attributed to the individual in his singularity and by the degree of independence conceded to him vis-à-vis the group to which he belongs and the institutions to which he is answerable;
- (2) the positive valuation of private life, that is the importance granted to family relationships, to the forms of domestic activity, and to the domain of patrimonial interests;
- (3) the intensity of the relations of self, that is, of the forms in which one is called upon to take oneself as an object of knowledge and a field of action, to transform, correct, and purify oneself, and find salvation.

Although the above-mentioned attitudes can be interconnected, such interconnections, as Foucault by means of different examples elucidates, are not necessary. Thus, we can consider a strong tendency towards the attitude of 'taking care of the self' in Greek culture as well as in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, despite the fact that in these ancient societies not only were the systems of local respective family relationships strong, but there also existed a strong network of economic dependency.

The reasons for such a situation are many, no doubt. Yet, in general, as Foucault shows, the activity devoted to oneself constituted a true social practice which often took form within institutionalized structures. What made the real social base for the attention to the self in ancient societies was not the existence of institutions like different schools, lectures and professionals of spiritual direction. Rather, this concern for the self found a ready support in the whole bundle of customary relations of kinship, friendship, and obligation. When, in the practice of the care of the self, one appealed to another person in whom one recognized an aptitude for guidance and counseling, one was exercising a right.

In this way, in ancient societies, concern for the self was not an obstacle to the intensification of social relations as it is in modern societies, where private life is highly valued and where the whole system of individual rights constitutes a framework within which individuals can all choose their own separate goals. Nevertheless, what both ancient and modern societies have in common regarding the question of individualism is the central position of the self reflected in the relation of oneself with oneself in a manner that enables people to afford an 'I'.

It is because of such a central position of the self that the individual aspects of existence are of great importance, not only in modern Western societies — in which private life is protected — but also in Greek and Roman ancient societies, where society imposed upon every individual a tight interdependence.

### Antiquity and the Development of the Concept of the Individual

The origin of the individual is commonly believed to date back to antiquity. The 'Person' is supposed to be born in Greek drama and established as individual in Roman law. As Marcel Mauss maintains, for the Romans 'person' (personne) is more than an organizational fact, more than a name or a right to assume a role and a ritual mask.

It is a basic fact of law. Yet, the category of the person existing in antiquity is not, apparently, the same category as we understand it today. Greek man, although aware of himself as an autonomous agent who strives in his own interests, is tightly bound to his polis. In other words, he is an active political member of his community. Aristotle had this in mind when he called man a political animal. Yet, the relationship between the Greek man and his polis bore a contradiction which finally led to the emergence of the individual. For the Greeks, man, on the one hand, 'could achieve his telos, or purpose, develop his highest nature, only as an active member of a body politic that was itself in active quest of the good life for the whole community', and, on the other, was able to take part actively in politics only if he was considered as a free and autonomous person — a necessary precondition for the realization of the idea of democracy as one of the cornerstones of Greek thought. This contradiction between the idea of man as simultaneously an autonomous being and one

tightly bound to the exigencies of the bien être of his society tended, with the Stoics and the Epicureans, to be solved in favor of man as an autonomous individual. Epicureans advocated the idea that 'man's fate was solely a personal matter', something that, according to Ketcham, opened the way to a radical individualism.

Nevertheless, the path from this quasi-autonomous individual to the modern autonomous, 'independent, socially disconnected, self-willed' individual of today was long. The 'person' had, as Mauss accentuates, first to become a moral fact, then find a metaphysical foundation, and only then change into the modern autonomous individual.

The first step was taken with the help of the Stoics, who added to the juridical meaning of the person a moral meaning, namely a 'sense of being conscious, independent, autonomous, free and responsible'.

Yet, although every individual, according to the Stoics, enjoys the freedom of will, his freedom is conditioned by his worldly desires. Happiness, wealth and possessions are not counted as good in an individual's life. To live in harmony with Nature is the only criterion for the goodness of an individual's life. For the Stoics, this harmony with Nature means to have one's will directed towards the same ends as those of Nature. This is the heart of the notion of virtue in the Stoic theory, which refers to a will in agreement with Nature. The conception of virtue as understood by the Stoics is in its essence individualistic. It is in fact the individual's virtue and without any connection with others' good that is at the center. In this way love, friendship and affection as well as bad passions are obstacles to the realization of an individual's virtue.

The sage does not feel sympathy; when his wife or his children die, he reflects that this event is no obstacle to his own virtue, and therefore he does not suffer deeply. Friendship ... must not be carried to the point where your friend's misfortunes can destroy your holy calm.... The stoic is not virtuous to do good, but does good to be virtuous. It has not occurred to him to love his neighbor as himself; love, except in a superficial sense, is absent from his conception of virtue.

As Russell maintains, to Stoics virtue as a cornerstone of morality is not supposed to benefit anybody else, whether friends, neighbors or

humanity at large, but the individual himself. Such a view of man and his morality is unfamiliar to the Early Christians, but we can recognize it in the spirit of Protestantism, i.e. the feeling of unprecedented inner loneliness of the single individual whose own eternal salvation (the holy calm in the Stoics' case) is the most important thing in his life. It is enough, as Weber maintains, to read Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress to understand how the Calvinist finds himself in a deep spiritual isolation and why his only thought is his own salvation. If a Calvinist searches for salvation through his labor, the Stoic reaches his holy calm thanks to his virtue, of which no outside force can deprive him. What is common to both is seeing the 'individual' and his satisfaction as the end of every human effort.

It is noteworthy that although both these views are different from the modern view of the individual, they are in one aspect akin to it. They both stress the 'private' aspects of existence, urge people to focus on themselves and emphasize personal conduct. We will come back to this point later; but here it suffices to mention that we can find an explicit contrast between such concern for the individual self in Western ways of thinking and the idea of the abnegation of the self based on the doctrine of the complete identification of the individual self with God as it emerged in Persian Sufism. The former view represents the realization of the self in relation to man himself, while the latter seeks the realization of the self in relation to 'other than self'.

The next step was to accord the notion of 'person' a metaphysical foundation. This, Mauss maintains, was realized by Christianity:

It is Christians who have made a metaphysical entity of the 'moral person' (personne morale), after they became aware of its religious power.

What is at issue here is the unity of 'person' (personne), and the unity of the Church, in relationship to the unity of God. In fact, Christianity turned 'person' into a rational, indivisible and individual substance. This claim can be proved, according to Mauss, by reference to the entire history of the Church. However, the way from this rational, indivisible, individual substance to today's concept of 'person' as a consciousness and a category was not long. In the following we are going to study the impact of Greek thought on



Christianity. We will try to show how Christianity granted the notion of 'person' a metaphysical foundation.

### Christianity and Greek Thought

The religious origin of the category of personality in Greek civilization, that is, the existence of a discrepancy between man and gods because of their competing relations, had an important consequence for Greek philosophy with respect to its view of the relation between body and soul: soul, which takes the character of divinity, does not express the singularity of the humans as subjects, rather it defines itself as the counterpart of the body. This idea appeared in Plato's doctrine of Reminiscence and in his belief in the distinction of body from soul.

As Weinberg maintains, according to Plato, when the mind had not yet been obscured by its incarnation into a body, the human soul existed in a super-mundane realm. Knowledge of Form, therefore, is due to our previous existence. It is a recollection of our unconscious experiences evoked by our sensations. Accordingly, the physical world is where Forms are imitated. The body, unlike the soul, is not the principle of life. Consequently, body and soul are separable and the soul will survive after the death of the body.

Considering the distinguished position of Plato in the construction of the philosophy of Christianity and the fact that 'the distinction of soul from body and the doctrine of knowledge as reminiscence are distinctive and permanently influential features of Plato's thought', we can appreciate to what extent the duality of body and soul has influenced the main current of Christian thought. Although traces of the Greek idea of the distinction of soul from body can be found in other religions, it reaches its climax in Christianity.

In the philosophy of St Augustine, one of the most important theologians to have influenced Western Christianity, we can recognize this idea. This is not the place to examine the philosophy of Augustine; let us only mention that the soul, according to him, is distinct from the body because the body is extended in three dimensions while the soul is not extended. The reason is that nothing but the soul itself is present to the soul; the mind therefore does not have to seek itself as if it were elsewhere. This self-knowledge of the mind leads to the idea that

the soul, as something that has the capacity of understanding, is superior to physical objects which only exist (for example the body). Here is a clue to the understanding of the approach that regards flesh and blood as 'dirty', 'impure' and 'inferior', and as the main obstacle to the unification of man with God. Because of this, we can easily understand why asceticism as a way for overcoming the desires of body was considered by Christianity as the main means for achieving salvation. We will soon come back to this point.

Obviously, it would be wrong to assume that Platonic thought was assimilated without any modifications by Christian theologians. No doubt a great part of the history of theology in the Middle Ages was based on the serious discussions between Platonists and Aristotelians (the latter group proceeded from Aristotle's theory of knowledge, which had been based on the rejection of Platonic Forms). Yet, despite this fact the idea of a distinction between soul and body has remained an integral part of the theological structure of the Christian tradition. It suffices to remember that, although until the thirteenth century the philosophies of both Plato and Aristotle used to be interpreted in Neoplatonic ways, the influence of Neoplatonism (especially that of Plotinus) could not help Christianity to set aside dualism; 'despite the monistic tendency of Plotinus' system, he remains essentially a dualist with respect to the relation of soul and body.'

The strong impact of the dualistic view on Christianity can also be shown by the fact that the reconciliation of mysticism and Christian thought has hardly ever occurred. In this respect, Schluchter maintains that in Christianity the idea of god forced the mystic to acknowledge that an 'ultimate union with God' was unattainable ...

Although this proposition to a certain degree is exaggerated, neglecting the fact that among Christian mystics we can also find a few — such as Meister Eckhardt, St Teresa and St John of the Cross — who acknowledge the 'ultimate union with God', it explains the general difficulty of Christian mystics in reconciling the idea of the 'Unity of Existence' with the institutionalized and established religious thought of Christianity. Discussing the different views of relationship between God and man, Kurt Almqvist contrasts two views, namely the mystical view — that of Hinduism and Sufism —

and the view that exists in Judaism, Christianity and Islam characterized by worshipping God and seeing Him as a Personal God.<sup>32</sup> According to Almqvist, in a theological view where God is perceived primarily as a Creator, that is, where the perspective of holy radiation is absent, the world will always seem to be definitively separated from God, and He will be perceived only as the personified object for the fear and love of man. In this case, duality is inescapable. Accordingly, within the main current of Christian thought 'ultimate union with God' is hardly considered attainable. J.R. Weinberg, when studying the mystical element in medieval thought, concludes that in the combination of a Neoplatonic system with Christianity, man faced many difficulties. As an example, Weinberg stresses the conflict between the will to be a free individual and the will to be a pantheist. He says:

there is a conflict, in the tendencies of Christian thought, between the plurality of free individuals and the necessary dependence of all beings on God.

This conflict represents an aspect of the dualism in certain strands of Christian thought. Indeed, if we admit, on the one hand, that in mysticism the point of departure is the idea of the identification of the individual self with God and, on the other hand, that such an identification is impossible in a conception where the body is solely flesh and blood, separated from the soul, then we will not find it difficult to understand why it is chiefly asceticism and not mysticism that prevails in Christianity.

When studying the historical differences between the Oriental kind of salvation religions and the Occidental ones, Weber has paid attention to exactly this point. According to him the essential historical difference between them is that the predominantly Oriental and Asiatic types of salvation religion culminate in contemplation and the Occidental ones in asceticism. It is from this point of departure that he arrives at the conclusion that

[i]n the Occident, on the other hand, apart from a few representatives of a distinctive quietism found only in modern time, even religions of an explicitly mystical type regularly became transformed into an active pursuit of virtue, which was naturally ascetical in the main.

Here it is interesting to mention that, when talking about asceticism as the Occidental type of salvation, Weber addresses himself in fact only to Christianity. For, according to him, while in Christianity we are witnessing a strong tendency towards asceticism, neither in the East-Asiatic religions nor in Jewry or Islam is asceticism considered a decisive type of salvation. Here it must be mentioned that although, as Weber maintains, 'early Islamism directly repudiated asceticism', to some degree asceticism is present in early Sufism, which was influenced by Christian mysticism. In the later form of Sufism, mysticism not asceticism became dominant.

At any rate, although Weber, in restricting asceticism to Christianity, neglects the fact that in some streams of Asian religions and in certain trends in Islam there exist tendencies towards asceticism, his characterization of Christianity as an ascetical religion and the Asian religions as contemplative ones is generally acceptable. If in Christianity the idea of the body as 'impure' and as a veil which separated man from God gives incentives to asceticism, in the Asian religions the idea of the 'Unity of Existence' tends to culminate in contemplation. Therefore, it is not surprising that while for a Hindu or a Jew or a Muslim 'salvation' can be achieved essentially through contemplation, for a Christian it can be realized through asceticism. It is noteworthy that the absence of the sense of sin, of the fall from grace, of spiritual guilt and the whole theodicy of suffering in Islam plays an important role in weakening the tendency towards asceticism. In this regard, we can take into consideration the Islamic attitude towards suffering which is, as Turner maintains, very different from the one prevalent in the Christian tradition. In accordance with Bowker, who maintains that the Qur'an requires that 'suffering should be contested and as far as possible alleviated', Turner remarks that 'suffering is almost dissolved as a problem, because in Islam there is an overriding emphasis on God's omnipotence.'

When discussing the central place of salvation and suffering in Christianity, we must bear in mind that the existence of a gap between man and God together with the separation of body from soul provides the spiritual background not only for the growth of the ideas of man's Sinfulness, but also of Trinity. These two ideas can well illustrate the

dualist world-view of Christianity. Indeed, the Christian doctrine of the creation of the world from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) by the instrumentality of the Son, and the idea that the Son is incarnated in the God-man, namely Jesus, can be understood against pure monotheism. As Kurt Almqvist maintains, although Christianity inherited the idea of Unity from Judaism, later, in Christianity, Unity fell into the background as God's incarnation in Jesus became essential and this in turn gave rise to Trinity. The understanding of Christ as being one with his Father made the figure of Jesus in the life of faith overshadow the figure of God. In a word, 'monochristianism' absorbs faith in God. The depreciation of the creation doctrine and Christian cosmology, which accelerates the separation of theology from science during the Enlightenment and the concomitant domination of materialism, can be traced back to this tension, which has had an essential role in the history of Christianity. We will return to this issue; yet here it must be mentioned that the Christological question, despite many attempts, has hardly been answered in a rational conceptual framework.

Accordingly, in the period when rationalistic philosophy became dominant, the anti-Trinitarian currents expanded (for example, the Humanist Enlightenment of the sixteenth century and the anti-Trinitarians of the Italian Renaissance). Yet, the anti-Trinitarian movement did not help Occidental thought to resolve the problem of dualism. Indeed, when faith in Trinity as well as faith in God were denigrated and the tendency towards the interpretation of Christian ideas from an anthropological point of view was augmented, Christian 'dualism' was transferred to the realms of philosophy and social science.

[Storyworld Possible Selves](#) by María-Ángeles Martínez [Applications of Cognitive Linguistics, De Gruyter Mouton, 9783110522532]

[Storyworld: Possible Selves](#) by Maria-Angeles Martínez presents an analytical tool for the study of the simultaneous idiosyncrasy and commonality of narrative experiencing. The concept of storyworld possible selves is an application of blending theory to the linguistic and literary analysis of emotional responses to narratives and of perspectival alignment with fictional entities.

Contents

Acknowledgments —	
1 Real selves in fictional worlds —	
1.1 Introduction —	
1.1.1 Foreword —	
1.1.2 Structure of the volume—	
1.2 Narrative engagement —	
1.3 Blending theory —	
1.3.1 Why blending—	
1.3.2 Basic blending networks-	
1.3.3 Vital relations and compression —	
1.3.4 Constitutive and governing principles for blending-	
1.3.5 Objections to blending theory —	
1.4 The role of storyworld possible selves —	
1.4.1 A description of the model-	
1.4.2 SPSs and narrative engagement—	
1.5 Interacting with narratives—	
1.5.1 Engagement pre-requisites —	
1.5.2 Perspective and focalization —	
1.5.3 Possible worlds —	
1.5.4 Deictic Shift Theory —	
1.6 Summary and concluding remarks —	
2 The objectification and subjectification of storyworld possible selves —	
2.1 Introduction —	
2.2 Intersubjectivity in storyworld construal—	
2.2.1 The discourse structure of narratives-	
2.2.2 Interactional cognitive linguistics and the basic narrative viewing arrangement—	
2.2.3 Narrative alignment: Intersubjectivity, indexicality, and interactional facework —	
2.2.4 Narrative deixis —	
2.2.5 Interactional positioning and identity construction —	
2.2.6 Facework and SPS subjectification —	
2.2.7 Narrative alterity and SPS blends —	
2.3 Methodology-	
2.4 SPS objectification and grounding-	
2.4.1 Pseudo and double deixis —	
2.4.2 Indefinite pronouns and noun phrases-	
2.5 SPS subjectification —	
2.5.1 SENSERless transitivity mental processes —	
2.5.2 Narrated Perception —	

2.5.3	Facework in focalizers' inner speech —
2.6	Setting up common ground for SPS projection through accumulation —
2.7	Nodes of SPS linguistic anchors —
2.8	Summary and concluding remarks—
3	Building an SPS blend —
3.1	Introduction —
3.2	Fictional and real minds —
3.3	Character and narrator constructs —
3.3.1	Characterization —
3.3.2	Building character input spaces —
3.4	The self-concept network: self-schemas and possible selves —
3.4.1	Origins and applications —
3.4.2	Self-schemas —
3.4.3	Possible selves —
3.5	Computational approaches to blending—
3.6	Summary and concluding remarks —
4	Properties and typology—
4.1	Introduction —
4.2	Properties of SPS blends —
4.3	Types of storyworld possible selves —
4.3.1	Self-schema and possible self input spaces—
4.3.2	Focalizer and narrator SPSs —
4.3.3	SPSs and blending network types—
4.4	Summary and concluding remarks—
5	SPS shifting and narrative ethics —
5.1	Introduction —
5.2	Narrative ethics and SPS projection —
5.2.1	The ethics of alterity—
5.2.2	Connecting across difference —
5.3	Intertextuality and the teenage SPS in Thomas Pynchon's <i>Against the Day</i> —
5.4	Genre and parallel SPS shifts in <i>Darkly Dreaming Dexter</i> —
5.5	Linear SPS shifting and ethics in <i>Breaking Bad</i> —
5.6	Summary and concluding remarks —
6	Conclusion —
6.1	Introduction —
6.2	Main insights —
6.3	Summary and concluding remarks —
	References —
	Index—

## Real selves in fictional worlds

Experiencing narratives is a human need.

Narratives provide cognitive stimuli about a variety of topics, events, and situations that we may encounter at some point or other in our lives, and they do so through means that range from the highly mimetic to the most despairingly unnatural and metaphorical. What is more, these topics, events, and situations may be universal and at the same time notoriously culture-specific. But for all their varied and uncountable realizations, the magic spell that narratives cast upon us cannot possibly be explained without reference to the individual, as it is the individual that actualizes narrative meaning by anchoring it to some specific context of interpretation and to the deepest and most private recesses of the experiencing mind. The aim of this volume is, precisely, to explore the cognitive processes underlying the idiosyncrasy of the narrative experience, with special attention to feelings and emotion as indispensable components of human cognition. In this enterprise I will combine insights from cognitive linguistics, social-psychology, and cognitive narratology, in an attempt to provide a better understanding of the cognitive and emotional intricacies of narrative engagement as regards individual readers' selves, in ways that may make the study of idiosyncratic narrative response more amenable to literary and linguistic investigation.

Anyone who has ever been carried away by a narrative knows that engagement transforms the real-world self. Sometimes this transformation is temporary, but other times you feel that the emotions, reflections, and revelations about human nature prompted by a narrative have made a lasting impression on your self-concept, and nothing will ever be the same. For instance, my most remarkable experiences as a young reader were with Jules Verne's novels. My father had Verne's complete works on one of our shelves, three beautiful thick volumes bound in reddish leather, with air-thin, gilt-edged pages that trembled in your fingers. I started with Michael Strogoff and could not stop until I went through most of the three books, some seven novels per book, after school and exams, between brief strolls with friends, through the long rainy afternoons and evenings of adolescence in a small provincial town. My favorite was *Mystery Island*, *Lille Mystérieuse*, not just because of the plot and the adventure, but because

I so profoundly identified with that Massachusetts engineer, Cyrus Smith. That wise, courageous, humane character. In my imagination, both while reading and long after closing the book, I trod the island's paths, climbed to sleep in its shady rock caves, trembled at the threatening perils, and mused at the mysterious presence that kept a caring eye on us. And, throughout the experience, I blended with Cyrus. Of course, he was a middle-aged man and I a teenage girl, he was from Massachusetts, and I from a small European town, he had arrived on that island in a hot air balloon, I by opening a book; but there was so much in him that I shared or would have liked to share that I cherished that borrowed identity as an invaluable source of learning, thrill, and pleasure.

It was much later that I came across words such as deictic center shift, perspectival alignment, intersubjective cognitive coordination, focalization, conceptual integration, character construction, self-schemas, possible selves, mirror blending, input spaces, narrative engagement. Such beautiful words. With them I could revisit my Cyrus experience and reflect on why "becoming" Cyrus had had such a deep and ever-lasting effect on me. And I realized that what had happened was that I had projected a storyworld possible self with Cyrus. Storyworld possible self, or SPS, is the term I use to refer to the hybrid mental construct, in this case my Cyrus/me mental representation, with which we inhabit the storyworlds projected by narratives. As a linguist, my approach stems from linguistic evidence that narratives contain a variety of linguistic expressions requiring a hybrid mental referent which includes both an intradiegetic perspectivizer, with ontological existence within the narrating situation, and an extra-diegetic one. In my example above, these were, respectively, Cyrus and my teen self.

In this book, I wish to share these reflections with my readers. This will take a lot of theory and big words, but please do not be deterred by the prospect, as the thick parts will be sprinkled with examples through which you will meet or revisit some remarkable fictional characters. And, above all, do not lose sight of your avid reader self-schema - you would not be reading this if you did not have one. That will guide you through the experience.

## Structure of the Book

The book is organized in sequenced layers, aimed at setting the multidisciplinary foundations of the SPS model for readers from a variety of backgrounds. The first layer reviews research into narrative engagement, focusing on how experts, mostly in the field of narrative psychology, have contributed to enlightening its related emotional and self-transformative components. The second provides an introduction to blending theory for readers unfamiliar with the paradigm, and offers a preliminary description of storyworld possible selves as blending networks. The third layer briefly presents some of the tenets in narrative theory - focalization, possible worlds, deictic shift theory - with a bearing on the SPS model. These three layers are presented in Chapter One. A fourth and crucial layer, developed in Chapter Two, derives its substance from interactional cognitive linguistics, and discusses narratives as the locus of intersubjective cognitive coordination between intra- and extradiegetic perspectivizers, presenting linguistic evidence of the presence of an SPS blend in the construal operations taking place in narrative experiencers' minds. The fifth layer is presented in Chapter Three, and consists in a specification of the constituent input spaces in a basic SPS blend, namely, character constructs on one hand, and experiencers' self-schemas and possible selves on the other. This is accompanied by a brief overview of relevant concepts and metalanguage in computational approaches to blending which help understand how the inputs to a blend are interconnected. After these foundations have been laid, Chapter Four provides a detailed description and examples of SPS operations, as well as an SPS taxonomy based on both the nature of the specific inputs, and the blending processes involved. Then, Chapter Five presents the analytic potential of the SPS model from linguistic and narrative standpoints. To this purpose, I discuss three specific narratives in the light of SPS theory, focusing on certain intradiegetic entities whose pull on audiences makes them suitable candidates to provide structure for SPS blends. The first of these discussions involves the Chums of Chance in Thomas Pynchon's novel *Against the Day* (2006); the second focuses on Dexter, the first person narrator in Lindsay's novel *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* (2004); and the third explores SPS projection with Walter White in the television series *Breaking Bad* (2008-

2013). Finally, Chapter Six looks back into all of the above and presents some concluding remarks, as well as reflections on lines for further research, which are plenty and multifaceted.

The main point of this study is that narrative immersion requires the projection into the storyworld of specific features in the reader's self-concept network which match isomorphic features in the intradiegetic perspectivizer's — narrator or focalizer — character construct, and are thus liable to be conceptually integrated in a blend which I call storyworld possible self. This claim is prompted by linguistic research, presented in Chapter Two in this volume, suggesting that a hybrid mental entity is recurrently involved in the frequent cases of ambiguous or unresolved reference found in narratives, including the doubly-deictic you, generic one and you, transitivity mental processes without an explicit SENSER, cases of Narrated Perception, and the presence of facework in focalizers' inner speech. In other words, the pervasiveness of these linguistic features in narratives suggests that the pragmatics of represented thought often invites the intersubjective construction of context and identity through the interaction of fictional and real minds.

By approaching the phenomenon of idiosyncratic narrative engagement and emotional response to narratives from the standpoint of storyworld possible selves, it is possible to identify not only specific linguistic configurations favoring readers' identification with fictional world entities, but also specific components in individual readers' self-concept with a bearing on emotion. Additionally, it is also possible to identify the textual cues which intervene in the triggering of specific SPSs both for individual readers and for communities of readers, since the self-concept input space contains features derived from both individual and culturally determined needs, memories, and experiences. In this sense, the model also makes it possible to establish a connection between individual engagement and emotional response on one hand, and conventionally accepted literary readings on the other, as SPSs are simultaneously universal, culture-specific, and idiosyncratic. And although the testing of deeply idiosyncratic projections would require psychological tests beyond the scope of this study, universal and culture-specific projections can be easily predicted by the model.

From a narratological point of view, SPSs prove useful when dealing with narrative metalepsis, understood as the ontological crossing of levels of existence which occurs when, for instance, fictional characters directly address a real-world author, or when real-world readers are directly addressed by characters' inner speech. Readers' projection into the storyworld is, in fact, a metaleptic move, as it involves crossing the ontological boundary separating the real from the fictional world. But it is also a metonymic one (Martínez 2014), as it is not the whole of the self-concept that gets projected, but just those features which have been selectively activated through analogical matching with the focalizer's or narrator's construct, so that other parts of the self — plans for the holidays, work duties, dinner being cooked — remain anchored to the discourse situation. More importantly, this projection preserves the aesthetic distance between real self and fictional Other which makes artistic appreciation possible. Regarding the psychology of narrative immersion, SPSs also enhance our understanding of storyworlds as simulation environments for behavioral training, and of the nature and onset of emotion in real-world, individual readers. In sum, storyworld possible selves are a useful tool when trying to analyse in systematic, scientific ways some of the linguistic and cognitive mechanisms with a role in narrative engagement and in the feelings of self-transformation that accompany satisfactory narrative experiences.

In fact, the interest of the model for cognitive narratologists and literary critics lies in the ease with which SPSs serve to account for individual reader response without losing sight of conventionally accepted narrative meanings, thus allowing the analysis of emotional response to specific narratives in ways that can be integrated with mainstream literary theory. The linguistic underpinnings of the concept make it useful for cognitive stylisticians and narrative discourse analysts as well, due to the attention devoted to the linguistic expressions which locate SPSs in the construal operations prompted by narrative discourse. Conversely, SPSs allow a cognitive linguistics approach to narrative construal which contemplates Speaker and Hearer not just as language users, but also as both conceptualizers and perceivers engaged in the intersubjective construction of meaning. Looking at narratives from

this perspective enhances current understandings of the narrator- as-teller/focalizer-as-viewer elusive dyad.

The concept and its applications can also prove of interest to artificial intelligence research in the field of natural language processing, as the model suggests that the artificial mind needs a self-concept for the generation of emotion and narrative engagement, and not just narrative processing, to occur. The model also has its place in the social-psychology literature on self-schemas and possible selves, since it develops a detailed application of these highly productive concepts to the study of narrative. In fact, SPSs may appeal to anybody with an interest in literature and in multimodal narratives — films, plays, songs, video-games — since they touch upon the familiar feelings of engagement and self-transformation, or their absence thereof, and help look for the sources of (un)engagement. Last but not least, the model illustrates the overarching explanatory power of blending theory.

The cognitive mechanisms involved in the projection of storyworld possible selves have been outlined before (Martinez 2012, 2014), but in this volume it is my purpose to elaborate on a myriad points beyond the constraints of a journal article. I will also present further research into some of the linguistic invitations to project an SPS, formally conceived as SPS subjectification and objectification devices in processes of intersubjective cognitive coordination between intra- and extradiegetic narrative perspectivizers. As is frequently the case in cognitive literary studies, SPSs exists on the fuzzy boundaries between the related areas of cognitive stylistics, cognitive poetics, and cognitive narratology. But let me adhere once again to Meir Sternberg's views on interdisciplinarity in cognitive approaches to literature, when he claims that "articulating the terms of alliance, however unpalatable at first, serves to promote it in the long run". Finally, and to bring cognition inevitably to the foreground, let me restate my deep belief that increased attention to the mind-related idiosyncrasy of the literary experience is a much needed stepping stone in interdisciplinary linguistic and literary research into narrative engagement.

## The objectification and subjectification of storyworld possible selves

In this chapter I have analysed several written fictional narratives in English, particularly their opening sections, in the light of interactional cognitive linguistics, with the aim of finding out whether SPSs may be linguistically traced in narrative discourse. In the data I have found certain linguistic phenomena of an indexical and interactional nature - doubly-deictic you, multiply-deictic one, pseudo-deictic you and one, SENSERless mental transitivity processes, indefinite pronouns and determiners, Narrated Perception, (im)politeness strategies in focalizers' inner speech, and accumulation - which seem to intervene in the cognitive objectification, subjectification, and grounding of SPS blends. This indicates that these hybrid mental constructs are located in the ground of the construal configurations prompted by narrative language. Narrative engagement thus emerges as a complex issue involving not only the logical processing of schemas and the generation of empathy and emotional response, but also individual readers' cooperative participation in dialogic mentalized interaction and identity co-construction with the perspectivizing narrator and/or focalizer.

Moreover, inclusive indexicality proves to be an all-encompassing narrative phenomenon. In the analysis, it includes expressions of referential opacity which seem to drag readers into the mental scenario. The narratives analysed also display a massive presence of expressions of interactional facework, which seem to invite the negotiation and co-construction of readers', narrators', and focalizers' identities in order to facilitate interactional positioning and alignment. This suggests that the linguistic organization of narratives provides opportunities for both the construction of real self and fictional Other as separate entities involved in dialogic intermental interaction, and a parallel blurring of the ontological boundaries between these entities via inclusive and indefinite reference, in ways that enable identification and SPS blending. Crucial to engagement thus seem processes related to positioning and identity negotiation, which affect both the character construct of the narrator/focalizer, and the reader's self-concept. The study suggests that intersubjective cognitive

coordination between fictional and real minds is an essential process which may be formally accounted for within an SPS framework. What is more, the fact that a hybrid conceptualizing element of the construal ground is constantly being linguistically objectified and subjectified in narrative discourse indicates that SPSs, as hybrid conceptualizing entities, are a part of that ground.

### Building an SPS blend

In this chapter I have tried to describe the cognitive processes whereby storyworld possible selves emerge. To this purpose, I have discussed the internal structure of the two inputs to a basic SPS blend, namely a character construct built for an intradiegetic perspectivizer, and the individual reader's or audience member's selfschemas and possible selves. In a basic SPS network, the generic space contains the organizing framework of narrative perspectivization, with an intradiegetic narrator and/or focalizer, and an extradiegetic audience member. Character constructs recruit their inner-space topology and elements from textual information ranging from explicit mentions in the text — direct characterization — to an assortment of narrative strategies for inferential, indirect characterization. These include forms of speech and thought presentation, genre cues, grammatical devices, flashbacks, intertextual echoes, comparisons and parallelisms with other characters, as well as the events and actions in which the characters themselves are involved, and the ways in which the plot signals narratorial stance. Audience self-concepts, on the other hand, are conceived as mental networks consisting of two sets of interrelated sub-schemas: self-schemas and possible selves. The former are the mental representations that we entertain for ourselves, built on the basis of social experience. The latter are images of ourselves that we would like or loathe to become. In social-psychology, it is the constant tension between an individual's self-schemas and possible selves that influences and often determines motivation and behavior. SPS blends metonymically involve subsets of individual audience members' selfschemas and/or possible selves that have been activated by a given narrative, and the character constructs that these individuals are building for a specific narrative entity, particularly a focalizing character or a narrator. Relevant matching features in the

respective input spaces get projected into the SPS blend.

In order to provide a better understanding of the operation of blends, the chapter has also sketched some major tenets in computational approaches to conceptual blending, with an emphasis on concepts such as semantic networks, spreading activation, or dormant and active bridges, which, in my view, not only enlarge the methodological and descriptive apparatus of SPS theory, but also hint at the model's potential for computational tractability.

### Properties and typology

Storyworld possible selves are mental models of the self projected into storyworlds, resulting from the conceptual integration of at least two input spaces: the character construct of an intradiegetic perspectivizer, and the individual reader's self-concept. Narrative cues activate subsets of relevant self-schemas and possible selves in real world experiencers' self-concept networks that match one or more features in the mental model which they are constructing for the intradiegetic perspectivizer. SPSs will be activated in audience members — readers, listeners, viewers, video game players — who are schematic in one or more of the features in the character construct being entertained for the narrator or focalizer. As shown in the previous chapter, features in a character construct are prompted by a battery of characterization devices found in narrative texts, but this textual information is further enriched and modeled using individual inferences and idiosyncratic self-relevance criteria. The textual information which may intervene in narrative characterization ranges from explicit descriptions of the character — by the narrator, by the character himself/ herself, or by other characters — to descriptions of his or her (or its) actions, words, feelings, memories, and physical surroundings. Characterization inferences may also be derived from meta-textual clues such as genre or intertextual echoes, rhetorical ordering and information staging, and linguistic organization *per se*, as in the case of choices in the system of transitivity of the clause, or the presence of facework in narrative inner speech. These strategies do not exhaust the possibilities for characterization in narratives, but may give an idea of the wealth of information to be fed into the character construct which functions as one of the input spaces in an SPS blend.



SPSs may be used in a variety of cognitive operations. First, they can be considered mental referents for the inclusive pronominal reference of doubly-deictic you and multiply-deictic one, and for other linguistic instances of referential opacity in narratives, as argued in Chapter Two in this volume. Second, they may throw further light on deictic center shifting. Within an SPS approach, this metaleptic move into the storyworld is performed by readers in their SPS abstract form, so that the model accounts for the fact that it is not the actual reader, nor the complete actual reader's self-concept, which is involved in deictic shifts across the ontological boundaries separating the real from the fictional world, but just one or a few of the reader's possible selves and/or self-schemas. In this way, the metonymic nature of deictic center shifting — it is not the whole of the reader's self that is transported — can be incorporated into the formal analysis of narrative engagement. In this sense, an SPS approach can also serve to explain the neurophysiological "overlap between self and other" occurring during narrative immersion. Third and most important, SPSs can throw further light on emotional responses to narratives not only in terms of empathic attachment to the feelings of a particular character, but also in terms of the activation of readers' and audience members' desired or feared possible selves. This means that, during narrative engagement, SPS blends are elaborated with reference to the real-world experiencer's circumstances, so that, rather than as mere empathic attachment to a character in its intradiegetic context of situation, emotional response may be explained as directly related to the real self and its real-world expectations, concerns, moral values, dreams, joys, and fears.

As noted above, people lack schemas for particular domains; some readers, for instance, may lack a sportive, parent, environmentally active, victim, skiing, sea-going, romantic self-schema. The non-projection of linking matches between relevant features in storyworld characters and the self-concept may make asche-matic individuals find a narrative uninteresting and personally irrelevant, due to its lack of potential for self-improvement and self-transformation. In other words, no matter how efficiently a deictic shift is linguistically and aesthetically prompted by the discourse, and cognitively processed and effected by a reader, a failure to establish meaningful cross-space

mappings between a relevant reader's self-schema or possible self, and features in the character construct of the intradiegetic perspectivizer, might result in an absence of feelings of self-relevance, so that the reader or TV viewer is likely to drop the book or turn off the TV, in this way opting out of a self-irrelevant narrative experience.

However, as the self-concept is not totally fixed, but subject to changes derived from both social experience and self-reflection, a narrative in which the reader has previously failed to be immersed may, a few months or years later, suddenly seem personally relevant and useful. This means that changes in the reader's self-concept, whether in its possible selves or, less likely, in its self-schemas, have determined the presence of features which were, simply, not previously there, and which now allow cross-domain mappings with the perspectivizing entity. Conversely, changes in the self-concept may make us feel unmoved by a narrative which seemed profoundly engaging on a previous occasion, but with which the modified self no longer finds relevant matches, and is thus perceived as no longer useful in terms of behavioral training or transformation potential. Similarly, an unwillingness to activate a painful self-schema or possible self that we prefer to keep safely dormant may make us block an SPS blending process by opting out of a narrative — novel, film, song, video-game — which is triggering the activation of dormant bridges which we would rather keep untouched.

But perhaps this account of the purely idiosyncratic aspects of narrative engagement may give the impression that, within SPS theory, everything in literary reading and narrative experiencing is totally arbitrary and subjective. This could not be less the case. Of course, subjectivity is intrinsic to the construction of narrative meaning, but none of us are what we are as a result of isolation from the influence of culture(s) and of social communities. In fact, much of what contributes to an individual's self-concept got there through social interaction of all sorts, and is, consequently, potentially suitable for collective intersubjective cognitive coordination in storyworld construal. The narratologist James Phelan reflects on this tension between legitimized narrative readings, based on the interpretations of critics and knowing audiences, and what he calls the "prison-house of subjectivity"

(Phelan 1994: 231), where we may be trapped if we try to explain and account for all possible readings by all possible individuals. In this sense, SPSs allow an understanding of the narrative experience which incorporates both the collective and the individual in the sense suggested by Phelan:

I both recognize and value the subjectivity of my readerly experience because it opens up a two-way street between the life experiences that have gone into shaping my subjectivity (including my reading of other texts) and my experiences as a reader of this text.

This is the position that I will follow in the present chapter, in which I deal with the internal structure of SPS blends, with special attention to the types of SPSs which may be generated during a narrative experience. First, I will go over what I consider to be the main properties of SPSs as blends. Then, I will discuss and illustrate a typology of SPS blends elaborated on the basis of three main criteria: a) the type of self-construct — self-schema, desired, undesired, past possible self, or past SPS — intervening in the projection; b) the type of character construct — narrator or focalizer — functioning as input; and c) the kind of blending network — simplex, mirror, single-scope, double-scope, and multiple — which is prompted for.

In this chapter I have presented an overview of the main features and properties of storyworld possible selves. I have also presented a classification of SPS blends on the basis of three main criteria: a) the type of self-concept structure in the extradiegetic perspectivizer's input space, b) the type of intradiegetic entity in the other input, and c) the type of blending network likely to intervene in the projection. These criteria yield several SPS types which are briefly sketched below. These, however, should not be understood as fixed or rigid taxonomies, but rather as attempts to systematize the study of SPSs by pinning down some of their most frequent structures and sources.

First, depending on the sub-network in audience members' self-concept that is activated and used as input to the blend, SPSs may be of five main types:

- Self-schema SPSs, construed from linking matches between an intradiegetic perspectivizer's character

construct, and one of the real-world experiencer's self schemas, such as the justice-lover self, the intellectual self, the aesthetically sensitive self, the sea-lover self, the parent self, or the good-friend self, among many others.

- Desired possible self SPSs, or desired SPSs for short, construed from linking matches between a relevant character construct, and features in one of the real-world experiencer's desired possible selves, such as the loved self, the happy self, the socially respected self, the free self, or the smart self.
- Undesired possible self SPSs, or undesired SPSs for short, construed from linking matches between features in a character construct, and features in one of audience members' undesired possible selves, including the endangered self, the lonely self, the loser self, the abused self, the ill or injured self, the betrayed self, or the disappointed self, to name just a few.
- Past possible self SPSs, emerging from the conceptual integration of a perspectivizing character construct and one of real-world experiencers' past possible selves, such as the child past self or the holidaying past self.
- Past SPSs, not to be confused with "past possible self SPSs", are conceptual structures construed during previous narrative experiences, which were incorporated in the self-concept network and get activated by a new narrative. These are likely to be involved in intertextual resonance.

Secondly, depending on the character construct type that is activated and used as input to the blend, SPSs may be of two main types: focalizer SPSs and narrator SPSs. Focalizer SPSs, built on the basis of characterization devices, may contain features of all sorts, both external — physical appearance, gender, age, residence, historical period — and internal — ethical values, social attitudes, fears, hopes, wishes, and so forth. These are retrieved from the text via direct and indirect characterization, as well as from inferences and knowledge of the world. Narrator SPSs, however, are more slippery structures, due to the difficulty in

dealing with narrators even within narratological studies, particularly in their claiming for themselves various interactional identities along the teller-perceiver gradient. This is why further research must be devoted to narrator SPSs, as a way of enriching both SPS approaches to narrative engagement, and current understandings of narrative perspectivization.

Finally, depending on the type of blending network which is involved in the projection, SPSs may also be of different kinds. First, simplex SPS networks are to be considered default structures, as they intervene in the conceptualization of intradiegetic and extradiegetic perspectivizers in the first place, by matching these narrative roles with the specific value that they acquire in specific reading events, in the form "X is the reader/narrator/focalizer of Y". The empty slots in this construction are to be filled in by specific, individual readers or audience members, as well as by specific characters, narrators, novels, movies, songs, plays, or video-games. Mirror and double-scope SPS networks, on the other hand, seem to intervene in most SPS types. The former involve compatible structures and easily matching elements, while the latter entail conflicting structures often resulting in clashes which, within SPS theory, are seen as the source of strong emotional and ethical involvement, and may thus be crucial to narrative engagement. Single-scope SPS networks are more closely related to the emergence of past SPSs, as these entail the recruitment by the blend of the organizing frame of only one of the inputs, in this case an already existing SPS, which lends its topology to the audience member's input and to the blend. SPS megablends may also emerge from narrative experiences involving multiple focalization in the form of group or collective minds. Furthermore, a specific SPS may shift from one network to another in the course of the same narrative experience, yielding further opportunities for the generation of emotional responses.

To recapitulate, storyworld possible selves are complex conceptual structures of an extremely dynamic nature, which may be explained by using the computational notion of semantic networks, and many of its associated concepts and insights. Not only are they generated below the horizon of consciousness, but can also constantly shift through the spreading activation of dormant bridging

relations connecting networked concepts. They may also overlap with one another and create waves of interrelated activation and deactivation, simultaneously producing novel structure which did not exist in the inputs, but which may now be projected back into them, generating modifications and new waves of feature projection and emergence. This meaning potential, innovation, and creativity can undoubtedly throw light on the complexity of narrative engagement in ways that allow its more systematic analysis and study.

### SPS shifting and narrative ethics

Narrative ethics and SPS projection: The ethics of alterity in his seminal *Narrative Ethics*, Adam Zachary Newton defines narrative ethics as "the armature of intersubjective relation accomplished through story", and underscores the "unmistakably contaminating" power of the act of saying. In this respect, narrative analysis seems to move on the verge of Critical Discourse Analysis, in the sense that both look into the ways in which the telling shapes and is shaped by its context of production and reception. In a later publication, Newton recalls the post-structuralist ethicist Geoffrey Harpham's (1999: x) view of narrative ethics as an "intimate and dynamic engagement with otherness" which transcends mere moralizing to include "all worldly circumstances in which something — a term, a principle, discourse, a person, a group — is forced to discover some way between indifference and warfare of coexisting with an other that is adjacent to but distinct from it". According to Harpham, the notion of otherness is crucial to an understanding of what he calls the ethical structure of engagement. As he puts it, "Ethics offers to provide a way of thinking that produces solutions to problems as general as 'How ought one to live?' and as specific as 'What should I tell my kids about sex?'". Self-schema theory, it should be remembered, is similarly concerned with the ways in which individuals both recruit this crucial information and are sensitive to social situations which favor this recruitment, which is eventually conducive to enhanced motivation, self-healing, social adjustment, and behavioral training. However, self-schema theory, despite its solid groundings in social issues, may people would actually want to be a true villain — resulting from the double-scope blending of conflicting structures and clashing elements across Walt's construct and viewers' self-schemas as morally principled

individuals. The resulting multiple blend will thus involve an assortment of self-concept substructures and a variety of blending operations, all of which may account for the complexity of audience responses to the television series. As the *Breaking Bad* scholar David P. Pierson puts it:

Emerging in the depths of the Great Recession (2007-2009) and in a post-welfare, neoliberal state, *Breaking Bad* expresses many of the social and economic struggles of a middle and working class America where only the ruthless capitalist entrepreneurs, whether legitimate or illegitimate, are handsomely rewarded and the timid often find themselves marginalized or even victimized in a winner-take-all modern society. Walt, in the pilot episode, explains to his students his views about chemistry as the study of change involving complex processes of growth, decay, and change. While he is talking about the subject of chemistry, he could just as well be describing not only his character but the narrative dynamics of *Breaking Bad*.

Furthermore, it could be claimed that this introductory high school chemistry lesson also serves to prepare viewers for the SPS shifts which they themselves will undergo if they choose to continue watching the show. As Pierson further explains, what Walt paradoxically seems to become is "an exemplar of neoliberal entrepreneurship as he transitions into a free-thinking criminal who carefully weighs the risks and benefits of his criminal actions". This shift is also reflected in Walt's drug-dealer alias, "Heisenberg". According to Alberto Brodesco, this alias frames all of Walt's actions under Heisenberg's "Uncertainty Principle", which holds that scientists are inevitably unable to foresee the far-reaching consequences of their actions, and must face potential unpredictability and chaos. What is more, this alias may also prompt for a Jekyll-Hyde frame, a duality involving double-scope blending in the character construction of Walt/ Heisenberg, and thus contributing to the ethically conflictive nature of the SPS network that audiences need to construct when engaging with *Breaking Bad* and identifying with its anti-hero. In fact, ethical conflict is probably just part of the appeal of the series, as are the fleeting positive emotions derived from being lured into a victim SPS which encapsulates plenty of

opportunities for useful self-transformation, to be then gradually pushed into an undesired criminal SPS, with the connected feelings of anxiety and disgust. Besides, it must not be forgotten that, once setup, the blending network is completely interconnected, so that fleeting emotion may make us quiver between the thrilling hope that the loser will not fail this time, and the sad certainty that the villain, inevitably and to everybody's benefit, will. However, it is probably our rebel SPS, and not mere empathy with Walt, that makes us so desperately want him to win, against all odds, so that the bridge to hope does not fade in the network. In fact, it is probably the relevance of the rebel SPS that provides the key to a better understanding of the emotions which make audiences blend with this character, despite its ethical challenge. As Koepsell and Arp put it: "Walt rebels too. He confronts a system that cheated him out of his just reward [...] He's the hero of his own drama, and a suitable anti-hero for the long, dark, recessionary times we live in".

Narrative engagement is frequently inseparable from what the narrative ethicist Geoffrey Galt Harpham describes as a merciless and endless self-interrogation resulting from the need to discriminate self from other. This involves a struggle between ethical alignment with the views and values of the narrative Other, and the views and values of the extradiegetic experiencing self. In this chapter I have explored ways in which an SPS analysis may contribute to bringing these ethical concerns, and the moral conflicts which they may generate, out of the shadows of undifferentiated emotion. In the first place, SPS projection requires the construction of a mental image for some of the narrative Other(s) whose worldviews shape the telling, namely the perspectivizing narrator and the focalizing character. Besides, SPSs involve a clear differentiation between the two input spaces that intervene in the blend, so that matching elements can be projected into the emergent structure, while elements without relevance to meaning construction will remain in their original space. SPSs may further allow the specification of the inner structure of the blending spaces — the ones for self and other — with the degree of delicacy required by the aims of the analysis. It may be possible, for instance, to identify an organizing framework which causes disquieting double-scope blending, as in the case

of the criminal SPS in the television series *Breaking Bad*. It may also be possible to isolate the exact element(s) involved in a meaningful Analogy or Disanalogy relation across a reader's and a character's constructs, as with the "killing for pleasure" feature in the protagonist's character construct in Jeff Lindsay's novel *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*. Another possibility discussed in this chapter is the projection and maintenance of an SPS likely to maximize opportunities for the defamiliarized experiencing of ethically shocking events such as the Great War in Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day*. The moral dilemmas which narrative SPSs have to face inside the storyworld may activate semantic bridges to relevant features in audience's self-concept networks. Once the character's and the audience member's networks are interconnected, the blend's organizing frame and elements may project features back into the inputs, in this way contributing to a fresh perception not only of the narrative and its entities and events, but also of the real world in which we interact with other real selves. In this way, the modified self will be involved in further forward and backward projection, resulting in complex, creative processes of meaning construction and storyworld construal.

In this chapter I have also introduced the notions of primary SPSs - those likely to be shared by communities of readers - and SPS shifts, or ongoing changes in the kind of SPS network projected through interaction with a narrative. Although initially projected SPSs seem to have powerful implications on how audiences are expected to navigate the storyworld, as in the three narratives discussed, these initial SPSs need not remain fixed throughout the experience. Rather, audiences are likely to be manipulated by the narrative agents - real and implied author, and narrator - into SPS shifts associated with narrative progression and with the fulfillment of certain communicative aims. In the narratives in the study, these shifts seem to be deeply connected to narrative ethics, and may be of two types: parallel (involving two or more simultaneously activated SPSs) and linear (in which an initial SPS is replaced by another as the narrative progresses). In *Against the Day*, for instance, the initially prompted teenage SPS is recurrently foregrounded and backgrounded until it eventually becomes the SPS from whose evaluative viewpoint readers must perspectivize the Great War. As with many adolescent perceptions, the

acute awareness of the newly noticed "horror transpiring on the ground" is mercifully mitigated by the blurred vision of early youth, but its ethical implications are there for the adult Pynchon reader to delve into. In *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*, the first person narrator seems to encourage a frantic carousel of conflicting, incompatible, parallel SPSs likely to keep readers busy at disentangling their own moral dilemmas, while Dexter wholeheartedly revels in his favourite entertainment. Finally, the initial projection of a powerful mirror victim SPS in *Breaking Bad* seems to fulfill the communicative purpose of luring viewers into projecting strong mirror blends with the protagonist, Walter White, before presenting them with the challenge of keeping hooked on him in equally powerful double-scope SPS blending after his fall from grace, in an example of linear SPS shifting. In all these cases, an SPS approach has facilitated the analysis of ethical conflict and alignment as likely sources of a variety of emotions. Additionally, in the two written narratives analysed, *Against the Day* and *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*, SPS blends are linguistically anchored by objectification and subjectification expressions of the sort described in Chapter Two, including the use of doubly-deictic you, SENSERless transitivity processes, indefinite expressions, Narrated Perception, clause and phrase clustering, and the language of interactional connectedness and separateness. To sum up, in this chapter SPSs have enabled an integrated analysis of ethical (dis)alignment, emotion, self-relevance, interactional positioning, and embodied simulation in narratives, on the basis of the blending of the narrative Other as construed from the text, and the audience's socially and experientially constructed selves.

Over the past decades, the study of narrative engagement has received attention from a variety of fronts. Fueled by literary movements such as reader response criticism and cognitive narratology, by emerging research in the cognitive sciences, by advances in neuro-biology, by innovative approaches in socialpsychology and communication studies, and by cognitive-oriented research in poetics and stylistics, among other quarters, researchers in related disciplines have targeted narratives as invaluable sources of

information about the human mind and about the complex intricacies of human interaction. Recently, attention in the field has extended from idealized, abstract implied audiences to the actual responses of individual audience members, as idiosyncrasy seems to be crucial to a better understanding of processes of interpretation, emotional response, and feelings of personal relevance and self-transformation. It is against this background that storyworld possible selves originate, as a further tool with which to address the study of narrative experientiality.

Storyworld possible selves, or SPS for short, draw from cognitive linguistics in several crucial respects. First, they are formally conceived as hybrid mental representations resulting from the conceptual blending of two mental spaces: the character construct being built for a narrator or focalizer on one hand, and one of the self-schemas or possible selves in individual readers' self concept network on the other. Second, within a cognitive grammar paradigm, SPS blends can be traced in certain linguistic configurations which function as objectification and subjectification mechanisms in construal operations connected to a variety of narrative utterances. These utterances seem to involve a hybrid mental referent, inclusive of both an intra- and an extradiegetic perspectivizer, whose linguistic objectification and subjectification indicates its very presence in the ground of the storyworld construal prompted by the utterance. Third, SPSs may be used in interactional cognitive linguistics approaches to narratives, as these constructs are a reflection of the processes whereby real readers and audience members engage in convergent or divergent alignment and intersubjective cognitive coordination with narrators and focalizers.

The discourse behavior of SPS blends suggests that narratives involve not only experientiality for the real self and identification with the narrative Other, but also shared experientiality, in the sense that it is from the construal of self and other as distinct entities that the stance-taking mechanisms conducive to engagement may proceed. Furthermore, narrative stance-taking and alignment differ from other types of language-prompted alignment in their dependence on the projection of a simulation environment - the storyworld - within which self and other overlap and blur in interaction.

These apparently contradictory moves - construing self and other as separate entities while simultaneously shifting into the deictic center occupied by the narrative Other in order to become one in the narrative experience - may be perfectly subsumed by SPS blends, as these involve, in the first place, the construction of differentiated mental spaces for the narrator/focalizer and the real reader, and in the second, the projection of relevant features from these spaces into a single, new conceptual structure, or blend. In narratives, shared experientiality and intersubjectivity no doubt operate across storyworld entities. However, the presence of linguistic strategies involved in the objectification and subjectification of readers' storyworld possible selves suggests that narrative intersubjectivity also operates interdiegetically, across ontological levels, and involves the cognitive interaction of real and fictional minds in the cooperative construction of meaning.

### Main insights

Due to the highly interdisciplinary nature of storyworld possible selves, in this volume I have tried to provide an overview of the main tenets in those disciplines with a strong bearing on the model, with the aim of facilitating a basic understanding of the construct, its constituents and formal properties, and its analytical possibilities. Within narratology, I have reviewed classic notions related to narrative perspective and focalization, characterization devices, and narrative ethics. Additionally, I have briefly presented essential concepts in cognitive narratology, such as deictic center shifting and the notion of possible worlds and storyworld projection. Within social-psychology, I have outlined the notions of self-schemas and possible selves, and have reviewed some of the main applications and implications of self-schema theory. The volume also contains an outline of conceptual blending, since familiarity with the model is crucial to an understanding of how SPSs may be applied to the study of narrative engagement. Blending theory is not the only cognitive linguistics paradigm with a bearing on SPS theory. Cognitive grammar, and, more specifically, the notions of construal, and of subjectification and objectification of ground entities, provide the theoretical framework for the linguistic analysis of SPS textual anchors. The fact that narratives contain a variety of linguistic

expressions and configurations which signal the presence of a hybrid conceptualizes in the ground of the storyworld construal prompted by the discourse points to the validity of the concept of SPSs as a tool for linguistic analysis. The linguistic expressions discussed indubitably do not exhaust the mechanisms for SPS subjectification and objectification, but hopefully suggest lines for further research.

Of no less importance are the insights to be gained from research in Artificial Intelligence (AI). This discipline has long been involved in the application of conceptual blending to the study of language and conceptualization. In artificial intelligence settings, this tradition has resulted in a number of useful concepts and terms which enrich the use of SPS blends as instruments in the study of narrative engagement. In fact, artificial intelligence researchers have developed solid models of conceptual integration based on the notion of semantic networks, which allow a detailed specification of the internal elements and organizing topology of blends. Artificial intelligence terms and procedures contribute to the analytical potential of SPS blends by suggesting how to spell out their internal composition in ways that facilitate the identification of relevant feature activation routes, dormant but latent areas, nodes, and bridges. Furthermore, computational methods allow the automatic generation of blends at an incredibly fast rate, which in turn facilitates the detection of pitfalls such as the large number of unfelicitous blendoids which may be prompted for by a particular trigger. In SPS approaches to the study of literature, this helps account for the fact that the number of SPS blends which may probabilistically result from the interaction of all possible real readers or audience members with a single narrative configuration or expression is endless. However, certain primary SPS blends are more likely in terms of socio-culturally predictable felicity. Once again, probabilistic SPS felicity, an assumption based on artificial intelligence approaches to conceptual blending, corroborates the possibility of applying SPSs to the study of both idiosyncratic and predictable emotional responses to specific narratives, as well as to research into the processing of narratives by artificial minds. Furthermore, the blending structure of SPSs, together with the strong computational tradition in the study and applications of conceptual

integration, open up possibilities for the computational tractability of SPS blends.

Conversely, SPSs might also be applied in artificial intelligence research, as the concept suggests that the artificial mind needs a self-concept network for crucial aspects of engagement to occur, particularly emotional responses, feelings of self-relevance, and the perception of opportunities for the transformation of the self.

Many of these tenets and principles have been discussed in previous chapters, and the discussion has yielded certain useful insights. To begin with, although SPS constructs serve to account for idiosyncratic aspects of narrative engagement, they do not rule out collectively sanctioned literary readings, as their internal structure is strongly influenced by exposure to and interaction with socio-cultural contexts. A key point thus is that SPSs are, simultaneously, culture-specific and idiosyncratic. In other words, an SPS approach to specific narratives allows taking into account extremely personal features together with elements derived from experiences shared by larger social groups, including communities of readers. From a methodological point of view, this opens up a wide range of possibilities, as the study of individual response may be undertaken concomitantly with research into commonly agreed interpretations and insights, and may also incorporate methods from the empirical study of self-schemas and possible selves in social psychology.

On the basis of relevant theoretical issues with a bearing on SPS projection, I have proposed a classification of storyworld possible selves along the two-fold axis of intervening mental spaces and intervening blending networks. This axis yields several combinations, such as, for instance, a narrator/self-schema/mirror SPS — in which one of the reader's or viewer's self-schemas blends with the character construct built for a given narrator, with which it shares topology and elements — or a focalizer/desired possible self/double-scope SPS — in which one of the reader's or viewer's desired possible selves blends with the character construct of a given focalizer, with which it does not share internal topology or elements. The relative ease with which these combinations may be identified and their compositional processes recovered makes it possible to address emotional response not just as a vague, nebulous phenomenon intuitively felt to be

of paramount importance to engagement, but as an accessible object of systematic study.

Furthermore, without ruling out the methods of psychology, SPSs may be empirically analysed using the methods of cognitive linguistics. It should be remembered that conceptual blending theory originates, precisely, in the study of language. The most fruitful approach in this respect seems to reside in the cognitive grammar notion of construal, or conceptualization associated with a given linguistic configuration in a specific context of situation. In fact, narrative language contains a variety of linguistic expressions which point to processes of objectification and subjectification of a hybrid conceptualizing entity, located in the ground of narrative construals. Objectification and subjectification basically refer to the processes whereby an entity implicit in the contextual situation is linguistically moved towards the focus of attention occupied by the foregrounded, or profiled, Object of attention. The doubly-deictic uses of the pronoun *you* are an example of this phenomenon, which suggests that a hybrid conceptualizing entity, or SPS, is actually present in participants' intersubjective construal of the events and situations in the storyworld. Once linguistically identified as hybrid mental referents, SPSs may be further used as implied referents in the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic analysis of a variety of linguistic phenomena common in narratives, such as double- and pseudo-deixis, and agentless mental processes, among others.

Conversely, the presence of SPS constructs in the ground of the construals prompted by narrative utterances may provide further light on narrative perspectivization, particularly regarding the dissatisfaction in narratological quarters with the focalizer/narrator divide. In cognitive grammar, the ground of a construal is considered to include the participants in the interaction, and these are formally conceived as simultaneously encapsulating the roles of speaker/hearer and viewer/conceptualizer. The underlying assumption is that linguistic coding presupposes a process of intersubjective conceptualization, in which at least two participants engage in the cooperative construction of meaning through linguistic interaction. In this process, speakers try to symbolically convey their evaluation of and positioning towards the represented entities, events,

and situations, while hearers respond to this bid for conceptual alignment with further expressions of evaluation and positioning. Symbolic expression, whether verbal, visual, or acoustic, is thus seen as inseparable from intersubjective conceptualization. The extension of these tenets to the study of narrative perspective, particularly to the supposedly conflicting roles of viewer/teller respectively occupied by narrators and focalizers, may contribute to a better understanding of the cognitive activity involved in narrative perspectivization and mediation.

The linguistic underpinnings of SPSs thus include aspects of intersubjective cognitive coordination, an area of research in cognitive linguistics which tries to address issues of stance-taking, positioning, and alignment across participants collaborating in the joint construction of meaning. Positioning and alignment are actually crucial to narrative applications of SPS theory. Due to their intrinsic connection to dialogic interaction between self and other, these interactional notions underlie the study of narrative ethics. Having to engage in ethical alignment with the view and values of a narrative Other is a key aspect of narrative engagement which frequently involves strong moral dilemmas. In fact, audience members may find it difficult to identify with certain narrative perspectivizers, and engagement is highly dependent on, precisely, moral conflict and disapproval. In terms of stance-taking, intradiegetic perspectivizers position themselves regarding the storyworld, and this invites a certain positioning from audience members as well. The result is interactional alignment, either convergent or divergent. Within an SPS model, convergent alignment is likely to be associated with mirror SPS blends, while divergent alignment is reflected in double-scope blending networks. Ethical alignment and SPS type, on the other hand, need not be fixed across a single narrative. Rather, SPSs should desirably be subjected to constant shifting, both parallel, or simultaneous, and linear, or sequenced, as it is from this constant modulation, simultaneity of conflicting structures, and gradual or sharp modifications in projected SPSs, that the self may enjoy the thrill of the narrative experience. The detailed study of SPS shifts and modulations in the course of a narrative experience may additionally provide further insights into the specific narrative itself, and into its effects both on



individual readers or viewers, and on broader audiences.

Last but not least, SPSs may be worth incorporating in the socio-psychological study of possible selves at large, as it is in this format that they become a part of one's self-concept network. According to self-schema therapists, the larger the number of self-schemas and possible selves of an individual, the higher the efficiency when accessing personally relevant information to be used in interpersonal situations. Narrative engagement may thus be seen as a powerful mechanism enriching the self-concept with safely, swiftly, and relatively effortlessly acquired sets of new possible selves — storyworld possible selves — to be used in everyday interaction with the physical and social world. Consequently, from a social psychology perspective, SPSs may help illuminate the human thirst for narratives as instruments of self-transformation, as this is intimately linked to personal experience, needs, and motivation. Conversely, since the self-concept, with its constituent self-schemas and possible selves, is the basis of SPS conceptual blending, all the insights of self-schema and possible selves theory, including its psychological testing methods, can in the future be applied to the study of the effects of narratives on individual readers and audience members. In fact, SPS theory may afford opportunities for small-scale psychological testing in which the methods of psychology are used to complement the empirical evidence of blending operations provided by artificial intelligence scholars. And, although the use of psychological tests is beyond the scope of this volume, further research into SPS projection should not be oblivious of this possibility.

Individuals' desired, feared, and past possible selves, together with self-schemas and past SPSs, are involved in mirror and double-scope blending with specific narrators and focalizing characters, yielding a variety of possible combinations which can nevertheless be carefully scrutinized on the basis of the internal structure of the intervening mental spaces, and of the blending operations involved. The resulting blending networks, even if highly complex and constantly shifting, allow a finer-grained analysis of the broad, undifferentiated mass of narrative emotion and experientiality, and complement literary, linguistic, and stylistic approaches to narratives.

These are some of the aspects in which storyworld possible selves may contribute to a better understanding of narrative engagement, as they afford opportunities for its formal analysis within cognitive paradigms. Storyworld possible selves throw further light on shared experientiality and narrative engagement as a way of learning about oneself and, very specifically, about how to relate the self to the larger social and physical world. Narratives are user-friendly, easily available instruments of self-transformation. Note the ease with which one may open and close a book — a world — switch on and off the TV or computer, walk in and out of a cinema. It would be great if one could just step in and out of one's life like this. Unfortunately, this is not possible. But what one can do is engage or disengage from an SPS blend with an intradiegetic perspectivizer, a fictional creature with fears, hopes, dreams, pains, and concerns very much like one's own. It is even possible to choose who to blend or de-blend with, which transformations to attempt and which not to. Through SPSs, all these processes can be better isolated and analysed, by focusing on the internal structure and topology of the input spaces and of the blend, on the types of blending operations involved, and on the mechanisms which help construe a hybrid conceptualizes from cues in the language of narratives. Character constructs blend with audiences' self-schemas and possible selves, and the emergent conceptual structure can safely undergo incredible experiences within the simulation environment of the storyworld, and shift back to the real world to enact a different set of interactional roles. But those narrative experiences are incorporated in the self-concept in the form of relevant SPSs, which become integrated in the network. And, as a result, the self-concept is both enriched and transformed.

The rich contributions of cognitive psychology and communication studies to the field of narrative engagement regarding identification with fictional entities, transportation, empathy, resonance, or embodied simulation, are crucial to SPS theory. However, SPSs crucially contribute to the toolkit for the analysis of narrative engagement by providing opportunities for empirical explorations which, without excluding the methods of psychology, also allow for both computational and linguistic tractability. The fact that conceptual blending, the cognitive mechanism which constitutes the backbone

of SPS projection, has been broadly used in computational studies no doubt affords further methodological possibilities and applications. Furthermore, an SPS approach predicts that psychological effects of identification, transportation, empathy, or resonance are just part of the phenomenon of emotion generation during narrative experiences, and cannot entirely account for its complexity. Rather, within SPS theory, emotional response is, to a great extent, associated with the happiness or anxiety derived from approaching or moving away from a desired or feared possible self. Furthermore, living through a variety of intense experiences, even in storyworlds, not only frequently touches upon ethical issues, but also provides opportunities for behavioral training and self-improvement, not to mention the anxiety associated with the anticipation of changes to the self-concept.

The psychologist Lauren Duncan uses self-schema theory to explore individuals' personal political salience (PPS), or the propensity to attach personal meaning to social and historical events. Duncan explains the rationale for this choice of paradigm as follows: "Conceptualizing PPS as a self-schema is useful because it provides a cognitive mechanism whereby people connect personal experiences to their wider social, historical, and political contexts". In my view, the same can be predicated of SPS theory: the main advantage of approaching narrative engagement from the standpoint of self-schema and possible selves theory is the possibility of scientifically accounting for individual responses within broader social and historical contexts. As Hazel R. Markus observes, "In fact, our futures may rest with our shared willingness to experiment with possible selves and possible worlds, and to redesign ourselves and our worlds so that there is room for all of us". This quote might well have been taken from a handbook of narratology. However, it comes from the introduction to a collection of essays on the applications of possible selves theory twenty years after Markus and Nurius' seminal article. None of the contributions in this 2006 Possible Selves collection mention applications of possible selves theory to the study of literature or narrative engagement. Hopefully, the notion of storyworld possible selves may fill this gap, or at least suggest ways in which interdisciplinary research in the pursuit of the grail of engagement may proceed.

[Women by the Waterfront: Modernist \(Re\)Visions of Gender, Self and Littoral Space](#) by Kathrin Tordasi [Epistemata Literaturwissenschaft, Königshausen & Neumann, 9783826062650]

Women by the Waterfront examines the role of the beach in modernist texts written by and about women. Combining original studies of nature writing with a queer perspective on the works of Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Stevie Smith and others, this book does not only open fresh pathways in the fields of modernist studies and human geography, it also reveals that beaches are a productive space in women's experimental literature. A close investigation of cultural artefacts including novels, short stories, story fragments, diary entries, paintings and poems shows that the beach serves as a 'room of their own': a flexible, in-between space which women use to challenge, suspend and transgress the limitations of a binary gender order.

- Contents
- Acknowledgments
- List of Abbreviations
- List of Figures
- Introduction
- Connecting Beach, Gender and Self, a First Reading
- Human Geography: Constructing Space, Gender and Self
- A Beach of their Own: Contesting Gendered Versions of Littoral Space
- Approaching the Liminal Beach: Key Questions and Lines of Thought
- Spatialising Gender, Gendering Spaces: Women and the Beach in British Cultural History
- 2.1 Beach Dimensions: Bathing, Swimming and Swimsuit Fashion
- Health and Pleasure
- Swimming and Competition
- The Shrinking Swimsuit
- 2.2 Beach Dimensions: Sand, Sun and Waves
- 2.3 Challenging Gender Norms in Beach Literature: First Impressions
- Interrogating the Limit: Theories of Liminality and Transgression
- 3.1 Semantic Spaces in Jurij Lotman's The Structure of the Artistic Text
- 3.2 Dangerous Liminality in Victor W. Turner's The Ritual Process
- 3.3 Liminality and Contestation:

Michel Foucault's "A Preface to Transgression"

3.4 Locating Liminality

Waves of Pure Delight': Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse

4.1 Houses Falling: The (De)Construction of Mrs Ramsay

The Angel in the House in Victorian and Fin de Siècle Discourse

The Ramsay Marriage: Two Temperaments, Two Spheres?

Two Notes and the Hollow Wave: Disturbing Patriarchal Harmony

The Veils of Civilisation and the Chaotic Sea:

Beyond Binary Epistemology

4.2 The Lighthouse Beam: Mrs Ramsay's Liminal Moment

'Losing personality one lost the fret': The Preliminal Stage

Transgressing the Limits of Taboo and Language:

The Importance of Ecstasy

Transgressing the Limits of Consciousness: The Unity of Subject and Environment

4.3 'I Have Had My Vision': Translating Beach Liminality into Art The Broken Mirror: Nature Writing and the Loss of Meaning in "Time Passes"

Making Connections: The Island as Mnemonic Space

Painting Mrs Ramsay: Liminality and the Creative Process

4.4 'Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading':

Concepts of Identity and Liminality in To the Lighthouse

The Farthest Shore: Katherine Mansfield's New Zealand Fiction

5.1 'I am the little colonial': Katherine Mansfield Read through the Spatial Tensions of Empire.

5.2 Rites of Passage in "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped"

5.3 Queering Desire on the Liminal Shore: "Summer Idylle"

5.4 The Secret Self in "At the Bay"

5.5 Beach Liminality and the Modernist Short Story

Toeing the Line: Beach Liminality and the Desire for Oblivion

6.1 Rewriting Women's Suicide by Drowning:

Kate Chopin's The Awakening

Oblivion and Queer Phenomenology: (Dis) Orientations of the Beachgoing Self

Echoes of Beach Liminality: Queering City Spaces and Temporalities

Returning to the Beach: The Self Between Drowning and Becoming

6.2 The Piano on the Beach: Defamiliarising Techniques in Jane Campion's The Piano

The Silent Musician: Changing Parameters of Self Performance.....

Going over the Edge and Coming Back: Oblivion as Comfort

6.3 'Oh no categories I pray': Beach Oblivion as a Foot-Off-The-Ground Technique

Ebb and Flow: Transgressing Normative Horizons

7.1 Beach Liminality Reflected through Anne Morrow Lindbergh's Gift from the Sea

7.2 Risking the Self: Beach Literature and the (Im)Possible Modes of Self-Crafting Beyond Gender

Works Cited

### Excerpt: Connecting Beach, Gender and Self, a First Reading

Katherine Mansfield's short story "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" (1922) begins in the home of the recently deceased Colonel Pinner. Struggling with the reality of their father's death, the sisters Josephine and Constantia walk around the house on tiptoes. To them, every aspect of the place feels oppressive, from the stifling heat and closed blinds to the narrow hallways. What is more, the spectre of the dead patriarch lingers in every corner. The sisters still hear the echo of their father's walking stick and Josephine worries that the Colonel might be watching from a chest of drawers, "hidden away—just behind the door-handle-ready to spring".

Mansfield's short story provides an excellent example for the impact of gender relations on the perception and the organisation of spaces. To Josephine and Constantia, the house they managed for the Colonel is both familiar and dangerous territory. The routines of the household provide them with orientation even as every step they take is shadowed by the fear of transgression. They have internalised the domestic rules of conduct: What to serve when you have guests for tea

(chocolate cake, even if buying such treats means you won't be able to heel your one pair of respectable shoes) How to deal with street musicians (pay them to leave before the Colonel has reason to complain). How to contribute to a conversation (ask for other people's opinions, do not upset anyone and make no demands). The sisters know and obey these rules, and yet each of their moves anticipates the Colonel's disapproval. Carefully picking their way across the map of proper behaviour, Josephine and Constantia are both trespassers in the house of the father, and part of its inventory.

At the same time, however, Mansfield's story implies that a change of place can influence individuals' view of themselves. Within the walls of their home the sisters anxiously reproduce a loop of dutiful, daughterly behaviour. The repetition seems inevitable, inescapable, until the end of the story when Constantia's memory leads her out of the confines of the house onto a shore:

She remembered too how, whenever they were at the seaside, she had gone off by herself and got as close to the sea as she could and sung something, something she had made up while she gazed all over the restless water. There had been this other life, running out, bringing things home in bags, getting things on approval, and arranging father's trays and trying not to annoy father. But it all seemed to have happened in a kind of tunnel. It wasn't real. It was only when she came out of the tunnel into the moonlight or by the sea or into a thunderstorm that she really felt herself.

Juxtaposing the cramped and airless house with the open expanse of the seaside, Mansfield's story emphasises the connection between Constantia's self-awareness and the spaces she inhabits. It indicates that Constantia's sense of who she is and how she can relate to the world changes depending on her location. Significantly, it marks the beach as a space that is both materially and metaphorically different from the townhouse: Where the house is defined by walls, locked doors and shuttered windows, the beach provides an unobstructed view of the sea. In a similar contrast, the house infuses Constantia with a sense of dread whereas the step into the open air invokes a palpable sense of relief. The change affects Constantia's perception as well: At home, her

father's demands narrow her awareness of time and space into a tunnel vision. At the shore, this framework of patriarchal relations dissolves and makes room for other modes of being and being aware. Singing songs of her own invention and gazing over the 'restless' sea, Constantia disengages from the parameters of her social role and the gendered identity it produces. Within the context of her home, Constantia is locked into her role as her fathers' keeper, as the servile spinster aunt and timid angel of a middle-class household. At the shore, these aspects of her self cease to matter, if only temporarily.

Constantia experiences this break in her routine, this sudden shift in her self-awareness, as liberating. And yet, the change also causes uncertainty. Down at the shore, the way she conducts herself during her daily life feels unreal, unstable, or suspicious. At the same time, however, her experience at the beach — even though it feels 'real' — lacks definition. The memory of the beach thus ends with Constantia's questioning both her life as she knows it, and the alternative she cannot quite grasp or articulate: "What did it mean? What was it she was always wanting? What did it all lead to? Now? Now?"

For Constantia, a visit to the beach mobilises her sense of who she is and how she relates to the world. The beach itself becomes the site where certainties dissolve and possibilities open up: In the empty, unstable space between land and sea, routines become suspended, time passes differently. The beachgoer's longing for something unexpressed raises questions, generates ambiguity and encourages reorientation. Phrased differently, the beach in Mansfield's short story serves as a quintessential liminal space.

It is this engagement with liminality which marks "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" as a first example for a particularly inclined set of beach texts written by modernist women writers. As the chapters in this book will argue, these texts utilise beach metaphors and a littoral setting to challenge gender norms as well as the notion of gender as a stable and inevitable category of knowledge. On a first glance, this suggests a paradox. After all, it can be argued that the beach — both as a social space and a literary setting — tends to be a site where gender differences and stereotypes become entrenched, rather than destabilised. How is it

possible, then, that the beach also emerges as a 'room of their own': a space which women use to suspend and transgress the limitations of a binary gender order?

*Women by the Waterfront* sets out to examine the effect of liminal beaches on the construction and deconstruction of identities in general, and the gendered identities of women in particular. It seeks to examine the interrelation between the organisation of space, the production of gendered identities and the formation of the individual's sense of self. In this, the book's approach is twofold: On the one hand, the chapters and their analyses demonstrate that the beach in Western societies has been (and continues to be) a rigorously gendered space. On the other hand, the chapters show that under specific circumstances, the beach also functions as a space that defies fixed definitions: It manifests as a place where gendered performances fail to repeat, epistemological limits are transgressed and social routines become suspended. This ambivalence becomes visible in the beach's cultural history, and — as I am going to argue — even more so in the literary representation of women at the beach. Drawing on the ideas and terminology of human geography, gender and queer theory, the book builds on the recognition that gender discourses both shape the production of spaces and determine the spatialisation of society, its material and ideological geography. Specifically, the book investigates the impact of gender discourses on the beach's cultural history in Anglophone societies, its manifestation as a social space and its representation in literature and art. At the same time, the book aims to examine alternative ways of thinking and writing about space and the people who relate to it. It discusses in how far subjects are defined by their position on the map of social and spatial relations, and in how far they (re)orientate themselves with the help of the local, specific places they move through.

This book argues that such alternatives can be realised (and have been realised) through the conception of the beach as a topographical and metaphorical threshold, which is why the focus of the analyses rests on the concept of liminality, on how it relates to the beach as a material, social and conceptual space, and how the concept of a liminal beach in turn relates to questions of identity.

Following this line of investigation, the book isolates some of the processes that construct individuals' identities and subject positions. Furthermore, it considers the complex dynamic between heteronomy and agency, between the reproduction of hegemonic patterns of performance and identification, and the potential for change.

### Approaching the Liminal Beach: Key Questions and Lines of Thought

One of the key objectives of this book is to investigate which means can accomplish a re-appropriation of littoral space by women. To this end, the individual chapters show how the beach came to be and continues to be a space that (re)produces and affirms gender binaries, yet they also discuss how women criticise and deconstruct these binaries and the norms and identity positions which they produce. To paraphrase Massey, the goal is to both "expose the hegemonic geographical imaginations" which have shaped the beach and women

beachgoers alike, and to take the further step of searching for alternatives. *Women by the Waterfront* surveys the cultural history of the seaside in order to highlight a number of gendering processes involved in the production of the beach as a social and conceptual space. At the same time, the book turns to literature: First, in order to discuss when and how the beach turns into a space where women interrupt social routines and habits of perception, and second, to determine how this spatial transformation can be made productive for proposing different modes of understanding world and self.

Chapter 2 outlines the development of sea-bathing in Great Britain and the Commonwealth from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century because this timespan includes a number of watershed moments for women beachgoers. The chapter highlights gendering processes, their impact on beach culture and their reproduction through the actions and interactions that take place at the beach. At the same time, the chapter isolates and investigates moments when gender differences and binary distinctions blur or become unstable. With this, the chapter opens up the investigation of the book's central hypothesis, namely that under certain circumstances and in specific contexts the beach can become a space/place that facilitates the

subversion, transgression and destabilisation of gender as an organising principle and a category of knowledge. As the chapter will also argue, some of the most innovative and influential examples for aberrant versions of the beach can be found in literature where the transgressive acts of the individual beachgoer and the women writers' experiments with form and representation are made explicit. Reading literary examples that respond to the development of beach culture in Great Britain and the Commonwealth, chapter 2 discusses a selection of beach texts that challenge dominant, gendered visions of the seaside through satire, formal experimentation and other modes of appropriation. These preliminary examples show that focusing on the liminal aspects of the beach and transforming them into metaphors to capture the beachgoer's awareness of world and self emerges as an intrinsic aspect of literary experimentation.

Chapter 3 discusses theories of liminality and transgression in order to assemble a working concept of liminality for the literary analyses. It investigates the relationship between liminality, space and self from three different perspectives: First, it considers the structuralist theory of spatially organised narratives as put forth by Jurij Lotman in *The Structure of the Artistic Text*. According to Lotman, characters in literature are defined through their affiliation with specific, semantically charged spaces. These affiliations are complicated every time a character crosses from one space to the next and thus the boundary emerges as a mobilising feature in this model. Even though Lotman's focus on a binary juxtaposition of spaces will be called into question, his description of border crossing as a view-altering event and a catalyst for change provides a number of useful notions about the function of the limen in literary texts. Drawing on Victor W. Turner's, *The Ritual Process* (1969), the second section of chapter 2 considers liminality from an anthropological point of view. Following van Gennep, Turner defines liminality as the key moment of a neophyte's ritualised passage from their old station within the community to a new one. According to Turner, the liminal phase transforms the neophyte by refashioning his "very being" (Turner 1969: 103): He enters a state of dissolution and becoming, his "characteristics [...] are ambiguous" and he "passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the

past or coming state" (Turner 1969: 94). The analysis will consider the three steps which Turner identifies as intrinsic to a rite of passage (separation, margin or limen, and aggregation) and question in how far the ideas behind Turner's model can be applied beyond the context of social ritual. Moving on to post-structuralist theory, the third section of chapter 2 then turns to Michel Foucault's essay "A Preface to Transgression". Responding to Georges Bataille, Foucault defines transgression as a moment when the subject experiences the temporary dissolution of those epistemological limits which have structured his view of the world and himself. Read together, these three theories present three key characteristics of liminality in the form of transfer, transformation and transgression. They also provide first insights into liminality's interconnected manifestations as spatial term, state of mind and metaphor. The characteristics and questions distilled from these theories provide the basis for the close reading chapters and will be expanded upon with concepts and critical approaches from gender and queer theory in the course of the literary analyses.

Chapter 4 starts off the literary analyses with a close reading of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. The chapter examines the relation between the novel's coastal setting and a process of disassociation, a movement in which the women in the book escape patriarchal classification and by extension the limits of a gendered identity. To that end, the focus of the analysis rests on two specific beach moments: Mrs Ramsay's synthesis with the lighthouse beam and Lily Briscoe's final painting. Analysing the preconditions, characteristics and outcome of these threshold experiences, the chapter defines different aspects of beach-liminality and discusses their effect on the individual characters' self-awareness. In addition, the chapter examines the tension between patriarchal structures and a stream of doubt, multiple perspectives and the dissolution of divisions which upheaves binaries such as male/female, body/mind, inner space/outer space, sound/touch and past/presence. Finally, the analysis considers the connection between these collapsing, heuristic distinctions and the novel's mingled landscapes, the bay where "the sea and sky looked all one fabric" and the "green sand dunes" that segue "into some moon country, uninhabited by men".

Chapter 5 focuses on one story fragment and two short stories by Katherine Mansfield; "Summer Idyll" (1906), "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped" (1912) and "At the Bay" (1922). All three pieces are set in New Zealand, which Mansfield portrays as "a strange land of borders and otherness ceaselessly constructed and deconstructed" (Kristeva 191). Much of this ambivalence and dynamism finds expression in Mansfield's approach to littoral space: Her descriptions of the New Zealand bays and beaches are both vivid and allusive; the blurred distinctions between sea and garden, bay and road, water and sand anticipate a blurring of the borders between identity markers such as masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual, secret self/surface self, self/other. At the same time, Mansfield's tendency to switch from a character's point of view to a detailed but seemingly unrelated sketch of nature disorients and the meaning of these sketches (along with the meaning of her characters' final words and gestures) remains elusive. The chapter shows that this curious doubling of resonance and dissonance created by Mansfield's nature writing functions as a key to understanding Mansfield's representation of precarious subjects: The women she writes about seem to be caught on the threshold between traditional gender expectations and a new form of understanding themselves, they slip into the cracks between established narratives and they begin this slide into liminality on thresholds, staircases, garden gates, coastal roads and the beach. Investigating these interdependencies, the chapter pursues the question what function liminality serves in Mansfield's stories, whether a liminal phase prepares Mansfield's characters for a reintegration into society as stable, unified subjects (as Victor W. Turner would suggest), or whether liminality can be seen as a movement of contestation that calls the very concept of stable and coherent identities into question.

Chapter 6 expands the literary corpus to concentrate on one aspect of beach liminality across different genres and different timestamps. Continuing the investigation of beach texts that challenge conventional modes of representing women in fiction, the final chapter aims to analyse oblivion both as a defiant desire and a narrative technique which women writers employ to subvert the notion of stable and inevitably gendered identities. The analysis considers three examples in

turn: Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899), Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1993) and Stevie Smith's poem "Oblivion" (1972). All three works establish oblivion as one possible characteristic of a liminal beach experience. All three approach oblivion as a polyvalent concept: Oblivion, in these examples, comprises the act of forgetting, of losing sight of some aspects of the phenomenal world and being temporarily unaware of the rules and norms that structure everyday life. It also refers, however, to the undoing of the self. In other contexts, the desire for oblivion is often equated with a desire for death and indeed, each of the above mentioned works shows their protagonists (or speakers) contemplating suicide by drowning. However, the context in which these contemplations occur and the manner of their representation differs from conventional narratives about women on the edge of oblivion. In the works of Chopin, Campion and Smith, oblivion does not signify "a dissolution of consciousness" (Dollimore 256), nor is the option of suicide by drowning represented as a form of punishment and redemption for the deviant woman. Instead, oblivion is fashioned as a moment of bliss and intense physical awareness, whereas the thought of drowning connotes a complex mixture of cultural and social criticism, of defiance, deviation and selfassertion. Chapter 6 considers the trope of the drowned woman and the forgetful woman in Anglophone art and literature, and discusses how liminal beach texts appropriate and modify this trope. Drawing on Halberstam's *The Art of Queer Failure* (2011), the chapter also investigates how the condition of oblivion — of becoming oblivious — can complicate "the reproduction of the dominant [social and symbolic order]". It analyses those instances when the beachgoer experiences liminal oblivion, and examines how this experience reverberates within the beachgoer's consciousness as she returns to life in the city.

The texts I have selected for [Women at the Waterfront](#) are representative, not exhaustive. They share similar aims and approaches, yet their takes on beach liminality are idiosyncratic and versatile enough to provide a complex overview of liminality's potential, its effect on the structure of literary texts, the production of knowledge and the construction of the self. For my analysis, I connect the individual works with a thread of questions that will be relevant in each chapter. Over the course of chapters 4 to 6, I investigate how the texts create

liminal beaches, asking which stylistic devices or narrative techniques they involve in the production of ambiguous spaces. Another, parallel line of investigation examines the effect of the liminal beach on the beachgoer, asking how the experience of a liminal moment influences the beachgoer's self-awareness, their orientation in and knowledge of the world. Furthermore, the close readings also consider in what way the addition of the liminal beach shapes the internal organisation of a text, its form and language.

Above all, [Women by the Waterfront](#) is invested in the idea of beach liminality as a concept that mobilizes, that unmoors preconceived notions about gender, sexuality and other categories, other structures of knowledge. As this book will show, the characters in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and other works of a similar inclination are drawn to "the pale semicircular beach" because they long for such a mobilization, and because the shore seems to facilitate the transformation of consciousness in a way that the city and the family home do not. In Woolf's own words, her characters head to the beach because they are "drawn by some need" and because down on the shore, "[it] was as if the water floated off and set sailing thoughts which had grown stagnant on dry land". <>

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