THE SHAPE OF THE BOOK

By Alberto Manguel

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

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

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

Mesopotamian reader, to the authority of the laws themselves.

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 But neither was suitable for the form of book that superseded tablet and scroll: the codex, or sheaf of bound pages.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

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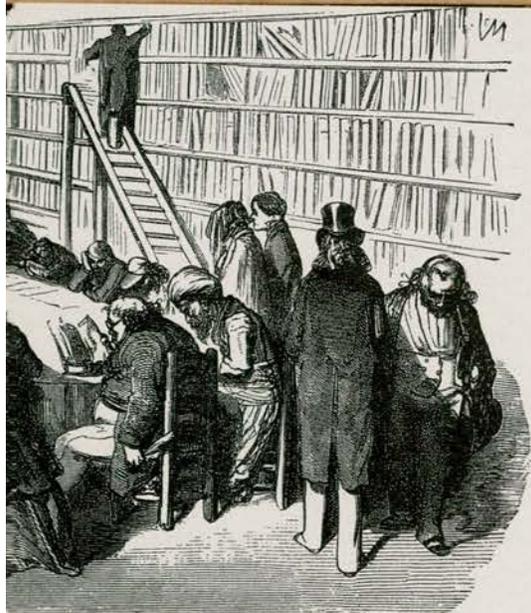
MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY
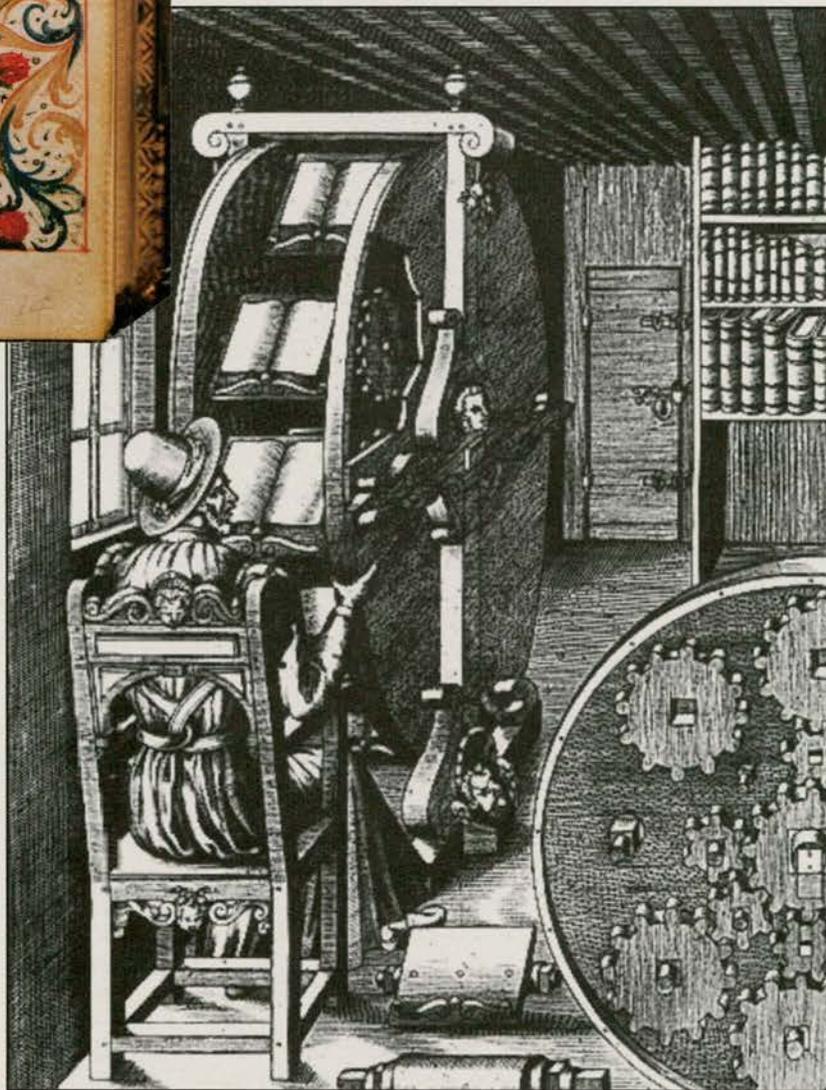
© BETTMANN/CORBIS

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

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

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

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

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

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

CRAFTING A book, whether the elephantine volumes chained to the lecterns or the dainty booklets made for a child's hand, was a long, laborious process. A change that took place in mid-15th century Europe not only reduced the number of working hours needed to produce a book, but dramatically increased the output of books, altering forever the reader's relationship to what was no longer an exclusive and
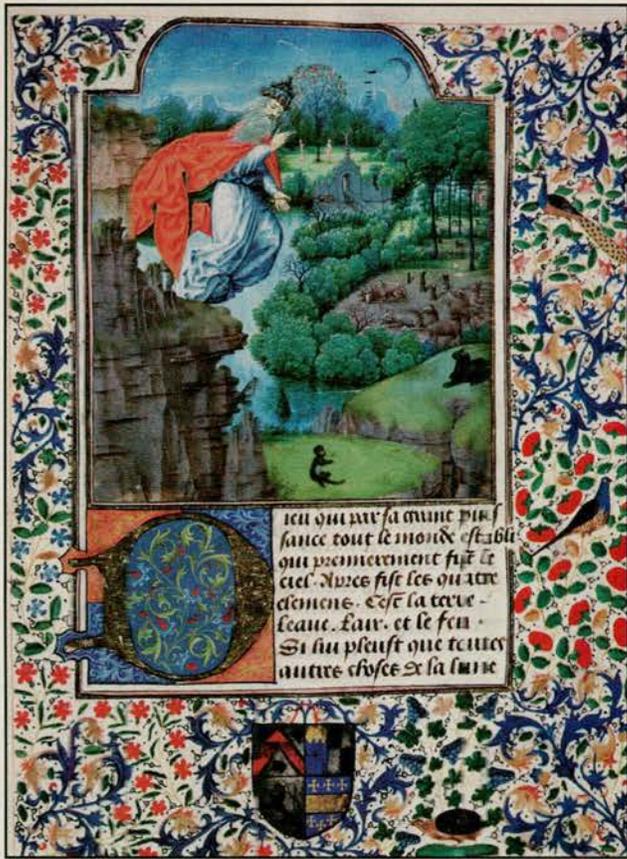
Book of Hours of the Countess of Bretiandos: Creation of the World (16th century)

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

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

> I did not see any complete Bibles, but I did see a certain number of five-page booklets [signatures] of several of the books of the Bible, with very clear and very proper lettering, and without any faults, which Your Eminence

would have been able to read effortlessly with no glasses. Various witnesses told me that 158 copies had been completed, while others say there were 180. I am not certain of the quantity, but about the books' completion, if people can be trusted, I have no doubts whatsoever. Had I known your wishes, I would certainly have bought a copy. Several of these five-page booklets were sent to the Emperor himself. I shall try, as far as possible, to have one of these Bibles delivered for sale and I will purchase one copy for you. But I am afraid that this may not be possible, both because of the distance and because, so they say, even before the books were finished, there were customers ready to buy them.[11]

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

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

The sudden increase in book production after Gutenberg emphasized the relation between the con-

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

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

As private libraries grew, readers began to find large volumes not only difficult to handle and uncomfortable to carry, but inconvenient to store. In 1501, confident in the success of his first editions, Aldus responded to readers' demands and brought out a series of pocket-sized books in octavo—half the size of quarto—elegantly printed and meticulously edited. To keep down the production costs he decided to print a thousand copies at a time, and to use the page more

economically he employed a newly designed type, "italic," created by the Bolognese punch-cutter Francesco Griffo, who also cut the first roman type in which the capitals were shorter than the ascending (full-height) letters of the lower case to ensure a better-balanced line. The result was a book that appeared much plainer than the ornate manuscript editions popular throughout the Middle Ages, a volume of elegant sobriety. What counted above all, for the owner of an Aldine pocket-book, was the text, clearly and eruditely printed—not a preciously decorated object. Griffo's italic type (first used in a woodcut illustrating a collection of letters of Saint Catherine of Siena, printed in 1500) gracefully drew the reader's attention to the delicate relationship between letters; according to the modern English critic Sir Francis Meynell, italics slowed down the reader's eye, "increasing his capacity to absorb the beauty of the text."[22]

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

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

with
glosses
of scholarly
lectures, gram-
mar manuals,
and sheets for
hornbooks.

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

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

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

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

In 1841, Christian Bernhard Tauchnitz of Leipzig had launched one of the most ambitious of all paperback series; at an average of one title a week it published more than 5,000 volumes in its first hundred years, bringing its circulation to somewhere between 50 million and 60 million copies. While the choice of titles was excellent, the production was not equal to

their content. The books were squarish, set in tiny type, with identical typographical covers that appealed neither to the hand nor to the eye.[31]

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

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

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

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

On July 30, 1935, the first 10 Penguins were launched at sixpence a volume. Lane had calculated that he would break even after 17,000 copies of each title were sold, but the first sales brought the number only to about 7,000. He went to see the buyer for the vast Woolworth general store chain, a Mr. Clifford Prescott, who demurred; the idea of selling books like any other merchandise, together with sets of socks
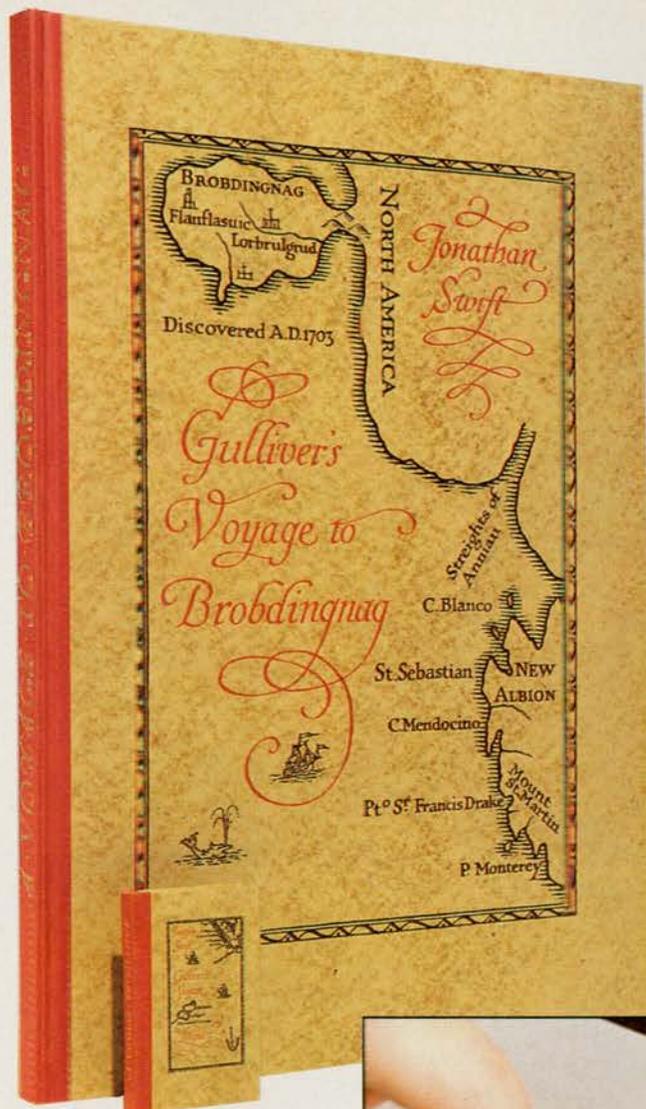
Above: Books as visual puns: a 1950 edition of Gulliver's Travels.
At right: The world's tiniest book, the 17th-century Enclosed Flower-Garden.
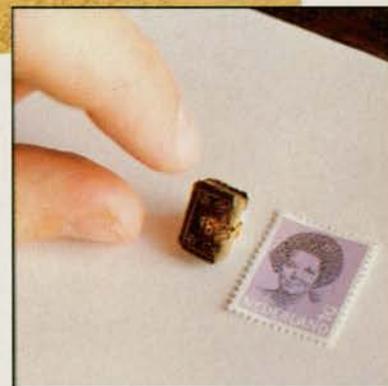
and tins of tea, seemed to him somehow ludicrous.

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

George Orwell summed up his reaction, both as reader and as author, to these newcomers. "In my capacity as reader," he wrote, "I applaud the Penguin Books; in my capacity as writer I pronounce them anathema. . . .The result may be a flood of cheap reprints which will cripple the lending libraries (the novelist's foster mother) and check the output of new novels. This would be a fine thing for literature, but a

very bad thing for trade."[34] He was wrong. More than its specific qualities (its vast distribution, its low cost, the excellence and wide range of its titles), Penguin's greatest achievement was symbolic. The knowledge that such a huge range of literature could be bought by almost anyone almost anywhere, from Tunis to Tucumán, from the Cook Islands to Reykjavik (such are the fruits of British expansionism that I have bought and read a Penguin in all these places), lent readers a symbol of their own ubiquity.

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

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

REFERENCES

[1]David Diringer, *The Hand-Produced Book* (London, 1953).

[2]Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*, ed. W.H.S. Jones (Cambridge, Mass., & London, 1968), XIII, 11.

[3]The earliest extant Greek codex on vellum is an *Iliad* from the third century A.D. (Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan).

[4]Martial, *Epigrammata*, XIV: 184, in *Works*, 2 vols., ed. W.C.A. Ker (Cambridge, Mass., & London, 1919-20).

[5]François I, *Lettres de François Ier au Pape* (Paris, 1527).

[6]John Power, *A Handy-Book about Books* (London, 1870).

[7]Janet Backhouse, *Books of Hours* (London, 1985).

[8]Johannes Duft, *Stiftsbibliothek Sankt Gallen: Geschichte,* *Barocksaal, Manuskripte* (St. Gall, 1990). The antiphonary is catalogued as Codex 541, *Antiphonarium officii* (parchment, 618 pp.), Abbey Library, St. Gall, Switzerland.

[9]Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1983).

[10]Victor Scholderer, *Johann Gutenberg* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1963).

[11]Quoted in Guy Bechtel, *Gutenberg et l'invention de l'imprimerie* (Paris, 1992).

[12]Paul Needham, director of the Books and Manuscripts Dept. at Sotheby's, New York, has suggested two other possible reactions from Gutenberg's public: surprise that the new method used metallurgical technology to produce letters, instead of quill or reed, and also that this "holy art" came from the backwaters of barbaric Germany instead of from learned Italy. Paul Needham, "Haec sancta ars: Gutenberg's Invention As a Divine Gift," in *Gazette of the Grolier Club*, Number 42, 1990, New York, 1991.

[13]Svend Dahl, *Historia del libro,* trans. Albert Adell; rev. Fernando Huarte Morton (Madrid, 1972).

[14]Konrad Haebler, *The Study of Incunabula* (London, 1953).

[15]Warren Chappell, *A Short History of the Printed Word* (New York, 1970).

[16]Sven Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age* (Boston & London, 1994).

[17]Catalogue: *Il Libro della Bibbia, Esposizione di manoscritti e di edizioni a stampa della Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana dal Secolo III al Secolo XVI* (Vatican City, 1972).

[18]Alan G. Thomas, *Great Books and Book Collectors* (London, 1975).

[19]Lucien Febvre & Henri-Jean Martin, *L'Apparition du livre* (Paris, 1958).

[20]Marino Zorzi, introduction to *Aldo Manuzio e l'ambiente veneziano 1494-1515,* ed. Susy Marcon & Marino Zorzi (Venice, 1994). Also: Martin Lowry, *The World of Aldus Manutius,* Oxford, 1979.

[21]Anthony Grafton, "The Strange Deaths of Hermes and the Sibyls," in *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450-1800* (Cambridge, Mass., & London, 1991).

[22]Quoted in Alan G. Thomas, *Fine Books* (London, 1967).

[23]Quoted in Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe.* (No source given.)

[24]Febvre & Martin, *L'Apparition du livre.*

[25]In the exhibition "Into the Heart of Africa," Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, 1992.

[26]Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale,* Act IV, Scene 4.

[27]The word apparently derives from the journeymen or "chapmen" who sold these books, "chapel" being the collective term for the journeymen attached to a particular printing house. See John Feather, ed., *A Dictionary of Book History* (New York, 1986).

[28]John Ashton, *Chap-books of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1882).

[29]Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th earl of Chesterfield, "Letter of Feb. 22 1748," *Letters to His Son, Philip Stanhope, Together with Several Other Pieces on Various Subjects* (London, 1774).

[30]John Sutherland, "Modes of Production," in *The Times Literary Supplement,* London, Nov. 19, 1993.

[31]Hans Schmoller, "The Paperback Revolution," in *Essays in the History of Publishing in Celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the House of Longman 1724-1974,* ed. Asa Briggs (London, 1974).

[32]Ibid.

[33]J.E. Morpurgo, *Allen Lane, King Penguin* (London, 1979).

[34]Quoted in Schmoller, "The Paperback Revolution."

[35]Anthony J. Mills, "A Penguin in the Sahara," in *Archeological Newsletter of the Royal Ontario Museum,* II: 37, Toronto, March 1990.

dious work.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Inherently fascinating subjects—how water gets from a reservoir to a kitchen sink, the locomotion of

> Inherently fascinating subjects—how water gets from a reservoir to a kitchen sink, the locomotion of flatworms, the discovery of penicillin and the polio vaccine, why sad songs like the blues often use minor chords—are without limit. None of these subjects needs an artificial stimulus to make it come alive.

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

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

When done well, these new content standards are a positive and possibly historic development in American education. But the gurus are telling teachers to go somewhere else—and moreover, that the "narrow"

knowledge embodied in new curriculum frameworks may bruise some children. Hence, teachers are undermined from the start. Well-intentioned teachers cannot realize these public expectations and at the same time abide the advice, theory, and recommendations that filter down to them from research university faculties and oracular educational institutes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Facts and academic mastery are what too many activities artfully dodge. What civilizations have considered the keys to and the superstructure of knowledge, contemporary progressives label lower-order skills. At their most debased, projects and activities are the curriculum of Nietzsche's Last People, who see the wonders of the world, a world formalized in the humanities and science—and can only blink.
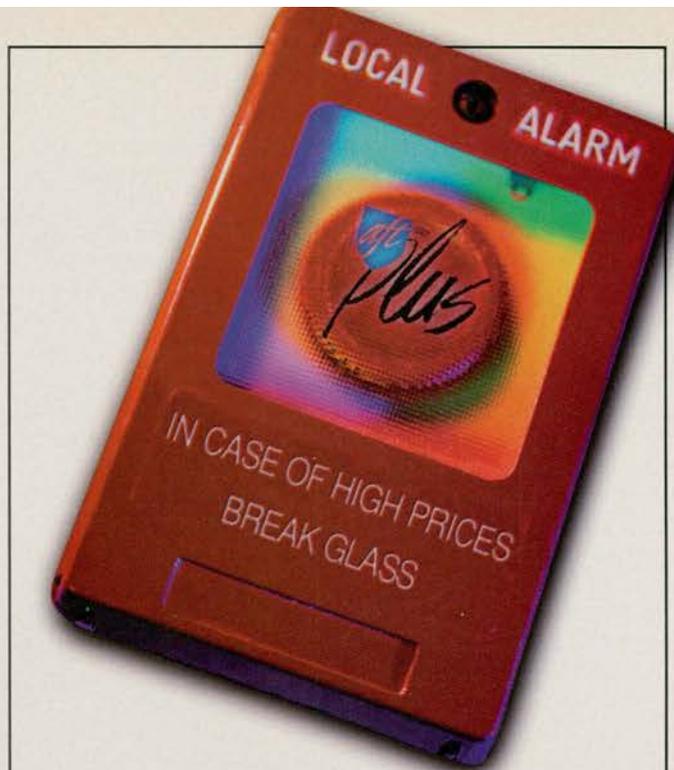
(Continued from page 15)

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

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

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

* * *

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

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

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

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

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

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

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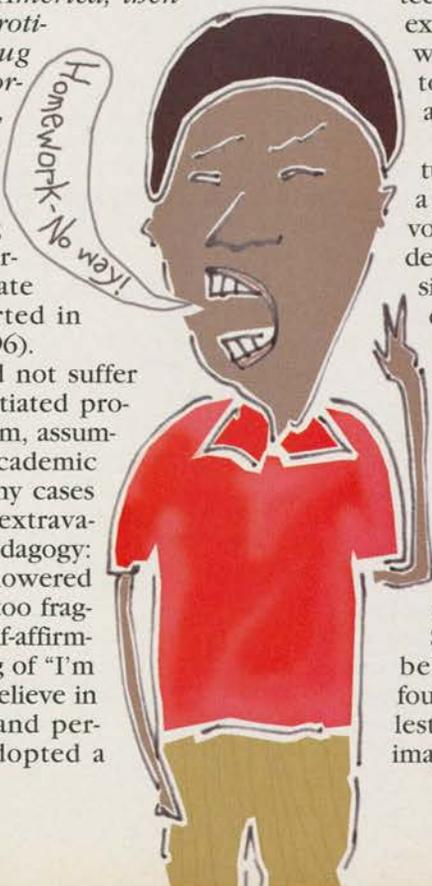
beings. They commit crimes not because they don't know the law, or because they can't tell right from wrong, but because they decide that they are exceptions to the law and the moral code. A criminal, Samenow explains (1984), "believes he is entitled to whatever he desires, and he will pursue it ruthlessly...[He]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

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

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

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

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

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

A growing number of scholars and educators are endorsing this older perspective. "It makes no sense for students to be full of self-esteem if they are empty of knowledge," argues Paul Vitz (1994, p. 18), because they will have to face reality some day and realize that

the self-adulation was empty whereas the ignorance remains real. For Martin Seligman, "what needs improving is not self-esteem but...our skills [for dealing] with the world" (cited in Reeve, 1996, p. 152). Summarizing contemporary research, John Marshall Reeve explains that the view of self formed in early childhood is shaped by "wildly biased parents," but eventually, through exposure to "peers, teachers, task feedback...and social comparison," a view simultaneously more realistic and more negative emerges—more negative because, contrary to the parents' view, "the self comes to realize that it is probably not the fastest, smartest, prettiest, and strongest self in the history of the world."

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

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

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

* * *

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

"Well, that's my opinion!" The statement, familiar to every classroom teacher from the early grades through graduate school, is made with the confidence medieval miscreants displayed when they rushed through the cathedral doors a few steps ahead of the authorities and cried "Sanctuary." Once formally labeled as an opinion, an idea is considered safe from criticism, challenge, and even simple questioning. Thus, the ex-

pected response on the teacher's part is to cease offending and acknowledge the validity of the student's statement. If the rules of this game applied equally to all players, teachers could at least be assured that *their* opinions would be accorded similar respect, but, alas, that is not the case. When the teacher says something that a student disagrees with, the teacher is still the offender because the student's right to be right trumps the teacher's right to her opinion.

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

"Expressing my negative feelings will relieve them"

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

all psychotherapies" (quoted in Tavris, 1982, p. 121).

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

"The teacher's job is to entertain me"

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

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

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

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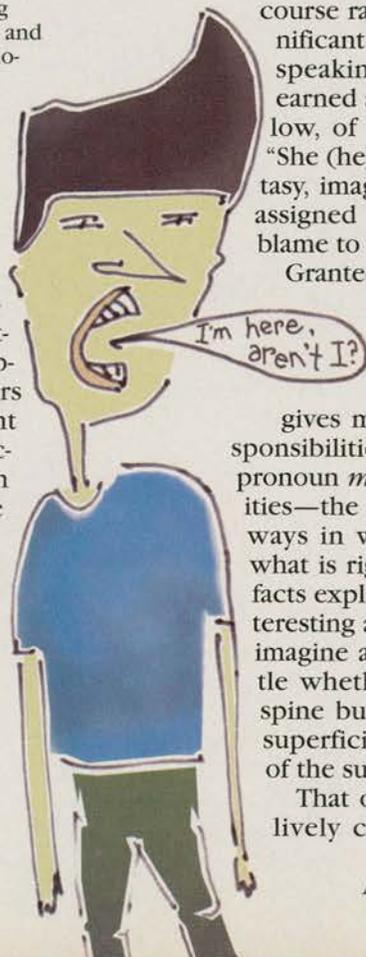
conditioning by the media, especially television. *Sesame Street* set the standard that all subsequent instruction was expected to meet and no genuine instruction could ever meet. What teacher has life-sized talking animals to assist her, a technical staff to transform inanimate letters and numbers into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

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

One good exercise for this purpose is the following:

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

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

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

REFERENCES

Baumeister, Roy F., L. Smart, and J. M. Boden (1996). "Relation of Threatened Egotism to Violence and Aggression: The Dark Side of High Self-Esteem." *Psychological Review, 103*:1.

Bobgan, Martin, and Deidre Bobgan (1987). *Psychoheresy.* Santa Barbara, Calif.: Eastgate.

Danckert, Stephen C. (Comp.) (1992). *The Quotable [Samuel] Johnson: A Topical Compilation of His Wit and Moral Wisdom.* San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

Dobson, James (1974). *Hide and Seek.* Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell.

Dyer, Wayne (1995). *Your Sacred Self.* New York: Harper.

Kohn, Alfie (1994). "The Truth about Self-Esteem." *Phi Delta Kappan,* December, 96.98.

LaPointe, A., N.A. Mean, and G. Philips (1989). *A World of Difference: An International Assessment of Mathematics and Science.* Princeton, N.J.: Educational Testing Service.

Lerner, Barbara (1985). "Self-Esteem and Excellence: The Choice and the Paradox." *American Educator,* Winter, 10-16.

McCormack, Patricia (1981). "Good News for the Underdog." *Santa Barbara* [Calif.] *News Press,* November 8, D-10.

McGarvey, Robert (1990). "Talk Yourself Up." *US Air Magazine,* March, 88-94.

McWilliams, Peter (1991, 1994). *Life 101: Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life in School—But Didn't.* Los Angeles: Prelude Press.

Reeve, John Marshall (1996). *Motivating Others: Nurturing Inner Motivational Resources.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Rogers, Carl R. (1961). *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Samenow, Stanton E. (1984). *Inside the Criminal Mind.* New York: Times Books.

Tavris, Carol (1982). *Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Vitz, Paul C. (1994). *Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship* (2d ed.). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.

That's your problem

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

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

Democracy and Conflict

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

■ conflicts reached a peak in 1992, but have since gradually decreased across all regions; while an annual average of 48.3 interstate and intrastate conflicts took place in the period 1989-1994, this annual average fell to 35.2 in the period 1995-98;

■ the number of major conflicts (that is, those in which there are over 1,000 deaths per year) has significantly declined from a high of 20 in 1991 and 1992 to 14 in 1993, to seven in 1994, down to six in 1995 and 1996, to seven in 1997, and up to 13 in 1998.

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

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

The Effects of Intervention

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

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

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

Last year saw a major NATO-led humanitarian intervention in Kosovo that successfully reversed the Yugoslav government's ethnic-cleansing campaign against the Albanian population. This action emphasized the resolve of the democratic world to prevent ethnic atrocities in its backyard. Yet the situation in postconflict Kosovo has not become easier to handle in the aftermath of the intervention. Indeed, while much suffering has been alleviated for the Albanian citizenry, a campaign of terror against Serbs and Gypsies (Roma), resulting in the death of hundreds of civilians and the displacement of tens of thousands, has effectively cleansed Kosovo of many of its non-Albanian minorities. At the same time, the international community's

unwillingness to risk attacks on its peacekeepers has resulted in significant compromises that have strengthened the power of the authoritarian Kosovo Liberation Army. Both these factors suggest that an effective, democratically based exit strategy is an unlikely prospect in the medium term, while the likelihood of a return of Serbian and Gypsy populations is remote.

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

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

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

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

REFERENCES

[1] Peter Wallensten and Margareta Sollenberg, "Armed Conflict, 1989-1998," *Journal of Peace Research* 5 (September 1999): 593-606.

[2] Timothy Sisk, "Democracy and Failed States," in *Freedom in the World: 1998-1999* (New York: Freedom House, 1999), 565.

DEMOCRACY AS A UNIVERSAL VALUE

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

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

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

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

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

It is not hard, of course, to find authoritarian writings within the Asian traditions. But neither is it hard to find them in Western classics: One has only to reflect on the writings of Plato or Aquinas to see that devotion to discipline is not a special Asian taste. To dismiss the plausibility of democracy as a universal value because of the presence of some Asian writings on dis-