

Us and Our Minds:

Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

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When I was young, I believed one could tell a person's intelligence from her or his eyes. This essay is about some of the ways I was mistaken. Put more elegantly, it is about the relation between human development and the Western tradition named for us that began in Italy some six centuries ago.

Humanism, the English general form of its name, became current only during the nineteenth century; but *Humanist* goes back to the (belated) advent in England of the Renaissance. Today it is usually denied the capital letter, and its most common meaning is "a scholar and/or teacher in the humanities," with *the humanities* generally defined negatively as "academic disciplines that study neither natural nor social phenomena." But that meaning of *humanist* shares the family tree whose roots have spread through and branches over six centuries with two very different meanings now current: the radical Right one of religious reactionaries—"atheist subversive"; and the radical-chic one of some literary theorists—"foolish believer that either language or life can be more-or-less understood." As different as the latter two meanings are from each other as well as from the common academic meaning, both designate more or less the same people, including a socialist—which is to say, radical Left—academic humanist like me.

My thesis, a radical one, concerns not my academic, but all our, humanity; still, the pun is essential to it. It comprises a

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sequence of four propositions. Humanism initially altered a few individuals' understandings of what humans are. Then over centuries—with Thomas Jefferson the crucial bridge—the Humanist tradition instituted for most humans in Western societies an altered relation to our minds. In the United States today, that relation—the essence of human development—is in trouble. Finally, the Humanist tradition both shows us how to respond, and indicates for the future a new and radical (to the root) altered relation to our minds, one which has subversive social consequences: hypostatizing the intellectual equality of almost all humans. As the initial sentences betoken, this argument for my thesis employs personal testimony.

I. Clearing the Ground

The ground of my thesis about human development and the Humanist tradition is encumbered by two familiar terms besides *Humanist: Arts and Sciences*; and *Liberal Arts*. I ask forbearance for a few paragraphs of necessary yard work.

Since the nineteenth century, natural studies have been called *science*; since early in the past century, social studies have been called *social science*; and now, thanks largely to a couple of French philosophers, human studies are increasingly being given the same honorific. But none of these were the *Sciences of Arts and Sciences*—nor the *Arts*. Latin *scientiae* means “things known,” of course: knowledge, learning; and *artes* means “skills,” “techniques”—so that the phrase “arts and sciences” is a good one to describe what is learned at a college or university: methodologies and subject matter. However, the words changed after being taken into English.

The Oxford English Dictionary devotes almost exactly a page to *science* and another to its derivatives. It was during the eighteenth century that it gradually lost meanings like “knowledge acquired by study” and “A particular branch of knowledge or study” in favor of “branches” that utilized *certain kinds of methodology*. Since it emphasized not subject matter but methodology—that is, skills, techniques—the new meaning of *science* became the Latin and old meaning of *art*. Gradually, the kinds of methodology those kinds of learning newly called “science” utilized—positivist, taxonomic, experimental—caused them to be considered the only truly logical and empirical kinds of learning, so that by the end of the nineteenth century what C.P. Snow would later call “The Two Cultures” began to define themselves in the English-speaking countries; and social studies appropriated the privileged word as quickly as it could manage.

The distortions and confusions that the last century inherited are illustrated by the exclusion of linguistics from the social *sciences* because the social phenomenon it studies is language, and language was associated with the other culture.

Ironically, of course, linguistics has employed the methods—such as experimentally controllable data—and achieved the results—such as general laws—that characterize biology and physics, geology and chemistry, far more successfully than have those disciplines that study economies, social organizations, or political behavior. *Human science* may be a bit desperate; but in the absence of our own neutral term like German *Wissenschaft* for both substance and methods, it is understandable.

“Art” underwent changed meaning even earlier than “science,” though less dramatically. The three classes of meaning in the O.E.D., which cover more than a page, all are related to *skill*. The first meaning in the second category, which goes back to 1300, is “certain branches of learning which are of the nature of intellectual instruments”; and the certain branches are the medieval Trivium: grammar (i.e., writings, literature), rhetoric and logic, and Quadrivium: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. It is worth pointing out for my purpose that the Trivium was more or less what our American Verbal Scholastic Aptitude Test tests for, and the Quadrivium has aspects of what our Quantitative S.A.T. tests for. Very early, those seven “intellectual instruments”—the methodologies of learning about the heavens and about literature, the methodologies geometry and music—seven disciplines (in the root sense of the familiar academic word) that are clearly sciences and humanities as we use those words today, were called “arts.” And as a group they were called the “free” or “liberal” arts.

According to the O.E.D., the word *liberal* originally designated neither largesse, nor a kind of politics, but precisely subjects of study: “those” subjects “worthy of a free (*liber*) man” as opposed to “servile or mechanical arts.” With the entry for this meaning, the O.E.D. expands beyond semantics to social history. It continues, “Now *rare*, exc. of education, culture, etc ...: Directed to general intellectual enlargement and refinement ...” A medical school trains its students to “practice” a practical art. It is not a liberal arts institution; but neither is a beauticians’ school. The term is culturally and politically interesting.

This is because while “liberal” can be taken to mean free, unrestricted (*liber*) in the sense that the Liberal Arts (today more or less synonymous with Arts and Sciences) are, in the words of the O.E.D., “Directed to general intellectual enlargement and refinement” rather than to “the requirements of technical or professional training.” Later developments of the root meaning of “liberal” are more sinister, a perversion of the idea of “intellectual refinement.” For example: “suitable to persons of superior social station” and “becoming a gentleman”—so that what is not liberal arts is “servile or mechanical.”

It may be more accurate to say that Humanism brought in the Renaissance than that the Renaissance brought in Humanism. The first Humanists were the Byzantine scholars who migrated to the Italian city-states, bringing with them their Greek and Latin manuscripts. Beginning with their arrival in what we call

"the West," Humanism gradually established in Christian Europe, it seems to me, a radically new fundamental conception of our species. It had two linked parts; and it took the form not of an articulated doctrine, but of an operative assumption.

The new tacit assumption was that human beings are valuable, and that human beings are capable. This new view of us, originating in the proof those manuscripts contained of human achievements in ancient—and pagan—Greece and Rome, this insistence that human beings are valuable, and that we are capable, nourished human daring—in exploration, in intellectual endeavor, in art, in commerce. Karl Marx wrote of the heroic merchants of the Renaissance.

Nevertheless, Humanism did not prevent those sinister meanings of *Liberal Arts* from developing, for they are found not in the Middle Ages but the day before yesterday: the O.E.D. quotes Edmund Burke, for example, Macaulay, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, the older brother of Virginia Woolf's father. Those meanings are echoed in the last and relevant one of the four definitions of *humanity*—I intend to get back to the other three—in the O.E.D. This definition involves "esp. the study of the ancient Latin and Greek classics"; and an explanatory note to it both specifies "liberal education" and recalls the religious Right by saying the word distinguishes—the humanities are—secular as opposed to religious learning. All three increments to the definition are to the point, and benign. But the *general* characterization of "humanity" is "polite scholarship."

The social prejudices and class biases in "superior social station," "gentleman" and "polite" were realized in the United States through much of our history in, for example, the refusal of departments of English and foreign languages, philosophy, and history at major universities and colleges, to hire Jewish faculty members. Ironically, the quintessential humanities department, Classics, usually was free of anti-Semitism, partly because classicists respected the Hebrew Bible and often knew Hebrew.

This anti-human bigotry against Jews, almost always against those African-Americans not already victimized by their schooling, often against Italians, Slavs, even all Roman Catholics including Anglo-Saxon ones, is the sinister negative legacy of Humanism to the humanities. It lasted to the end of my student years. It frustrated the efforts of my graduate department, generally considered the most distinguished in the country, to secure for me a job interview at the third or fourth most distinguished. And I believe I was the first Jew made a full member of my own English department. However, the next two appointments to my department were Jews; and the second made two of our seven members women, a good record for almost a half-century ago. Because "gentleman" has, of course, a sinister meaning in addition to its class one; and that explanatory note to *humanity*⁴ prefaces the words "liberal education" with "mental cultivation befitting a man." Bigotry in our

university humanities departments has victimized Anglo-Saxon Protestants too—when they have been women.

Happily, the stupidity as well as the injustice of this anti-human dimension of humanist history is increasingly recognized, and seems—if too slowly perhaps—becoming itself history. This bigotry has been a grotesque distortion of the humanist tradition; for all true humanist prejudices seem grounded in that fundamental conception of humans as valuable—worthy—and as capable: true humanist prejudices seem characteristically to be for, not against, humans and their doings.

Not "polite" in that phrase but "scholarship" specifies the more characteristic prejudice in the humanist tradition, the one favorable to humans: that tradition does not disdain all but "persons of superior social station" but proffers to people—humans—in the words of the O.E.D., "intellectual enlargement and refinement." Humanism has traditionally stood for adventure with the human mind, what we call the life of the mind, *what* can be known and *ways* of coming to know it—sciences and arts.

Cleared of encumbrances, the ground on which *Arts and Sciences*, *Liberal Arts*, and *Humanist/Humanism* conjoin is the humanist value of "mental cultivation," "general intellectual enlargement." That value has an inevitable corollary.

II. The Humanist Ethos

That the O.E.D. provides four definitions of *humanity* has been mentioned. They are organized in two groups of two, distinguished by Roman numerals. The two definitions of Group I are designated "Connected with human"—"human nature," and "The human race." Group II is designated "Connected with *humane*," and "humanity"³ is "The character or quality of being humane," "Civility, courtesy ... kindness," and finally, "Disposition to treat human beings and animals with consideration and compassion ... benevolence; = [with full caps invoking as synonym another entry] HUMANENESS." The fourth definition, the one in Group II quoted from earlier, specifies "mental cultivation," "liberal education."

The two Group II, "Connected with *humane*," definitions of *humanity*: "benevolence" etc. and "mental cultivation" etc., appear to be totally different. I think they are tightly linked, so that the inevitable corollary to the humanist value of mental cultivation is corollary also to benevolence. Their relation reveals itself when one considers that the fundamental humanist conception of human beings as valuable and as capable constitutes an ethos. The humanist ethos is not just different from, but truly antithetical to, the bigotry and the emphasis on privilege into which Humanism was sometimes diverted. For if human beings are valuable and capable, implicitly we all deserve respect for our worth, in which respect is the opposite

of bigotry; and we all deserve an opportunity to nurture our capability, in which opportunity is the de-privileging of privilege—it is that elusive good, equality (at least, equality of treatment). Both the respect and the opportunity are benevolent; and both involve the development of mind.

In other words, it is the humanist ethos itself—the insistence on human worth and capability—that links together benevolence and mental cultivation, the two meanings of *humanity* as “humane.” The historical consequences for humans—for “humanity” in that sense—of the humanist ethos have been awesome. Respect for the worth of individuals made the movement to democracy inevitable, even if it has been taking centuries evolving. And awareness that our minds are capable made inevitable the movement to develop—which is to say, educate—our minds, which also still is evolving. Furthermore, democracy requires developed minds, and—as the former Soviet Union and its European client governments, and our client governments in such places as Taiwan and South Korea, have been discovering—developed minds demand democracy.

Access to education was from the beginning the inevitable corollary to the humanist value of mental cultivation. And benevolently the humanist ethos mandates that access for all humans. At the fulcrum point between our own time and the first adventurous discoveries—of the New World and the solar system, the circulation of the blood and the cycles of civilizations, Plato and Aeschylus—a great humanist believer in the worth of people and in the power of mind provided a bridge over which the ethos of Humanism has been conveying itself from those first adventurers to the twenty-first century. I refer to probably history’s greatest champion of democracy and education—and not only of both, but champion of both together, of the two as inextricable. I call him that not because he originated his ideas, but because he evolved a vision and a program out of the new ideas of contemporary English and French Enlightenment philosophers.

He was a politer person than we tend to be, and began his justification for a war of national liberation, or *Declaration of Independence*, by saying others deserve to know his and his fellow-subversives’ reasons. He then listed “truths” that “We hold to be self-evident,” the first two of which are at the same time—significantly—new Enlightenment philosophy and solidly humanist: “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.” And of course the third truth names three of those Rights that cannot be removed: “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

That Jefferson was influenced by John Locke is a truism. But Locke named as a man’s “property” (in his *Second Treatise of Government*), “life, liberty, and estate.” The concept of “happiness” was popular among left-wing English political philosophers from Bentham to Mill, and even comes into my own state’s Constitution; although elusive, it is a humane concept. But in altering Locke’s “estate,” that is,

property, to not “Happiness” but “the *pursuit of Happiness*,” Jefferson was transcending simple humaneness, if I understand what he means by the phrase; in its place he was asserting the fundamental humanist ethos that we—all of us—are valuable and capable.

In the famous correspondence with his one-time political antagonist from Massachusetts who would die the same day (July 4, 1826), the fiftieth anniversary of the *Declaration of Independence*, the aging Jefferson boasts to John Adams—about certain laws he had persuaded the Virginia legislature to adopt at the time of the *Declaration*—that “These laws, drawn by myself, laid the ax to the foot of pseudo-aristocracy” (letter of Oct. 28, 1813). He defines the word earlier in the same letter: “artificial aristocracy, founded on wealth and birth, without either virtue or talents,” in contrast to “a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents”—that is to say, human accomplishment. Jefferson’s hostility to the disproportionate power in government and society of people not truly best (*aristos*), only privileged as he himself was privileged, and his mockery of the argument that the majority of such people are more public-spirited than ordinary citizens, run through his writings like a *leitmotif*.

The boast of having felled (chopped down) “pseudo-aristocracy” is followed directly by an expressed disappointment:

And had another [law] which I prepared been adopted by the legislature, our work would have been complete. It was a bill for the more general diffusion of learning.

What follows is a description of a system of free education for all qualified young Virginians right up through “an University”:

Worth and genius would thus have been sought out from every condition of life, and completely prepared by education for defeating the competition of wealth and birth for public trust.

Qualified young Virginians did not include slaves (or women). And this is the proper point to acknowledge the apparent rank hypocrisy of Jefferson’s eloquent enunciation of those “truths” at the beginning of his manifesto. The *Declaration* certainly was, in the useful Marxist formulation, objectively hypocritical. But the issue can only be acknowledged here: there is a small library of studies arguing for and against Jefferson’s guilt about owning slaves and/or uncertainty about slavery and/or private desire for abolition. A related matter it is possible to deal with, one that in fact is more pertinent, is the current historical myth of Jefferson the aristocrat, to which conventionally is opposed the myth of Andrew Jackson the democrat.

As historical myths do, this compound myth about two impressive men corresponds in some respects to the knowable reality. Jefferson did not anticipate an urban society with relatively few yeoman ("family") farmers; but he shared Jackson's democratic-egalitarian commitment. The myth ignores that crucial fact. The reality informing it is the contrast between the aggressively nationalistic soldier and the scholarly statesman with a library of more than ten thousand volumes, including the difference of origins (class) this contrast seems to adumbrate. In fact, Jefferson's father was a civil engineer and a (Whig) democrat—he was a red-diaper baby of his time. But in the myth, an aristocratic origin is contrasted with that of the plebeian frontiersman (Jackson's parents also were recent Irish immigrants). The Jackson submyth-of-origin anticipated the log-cabin Lincoln submyth much as, in an earlier messianic leader myth-pattern, "Pharaoh's" slaying of the Hebrew first-born anticipated Herod's Slaughter of the Innocents.

The Jefferson-Jackson compound myth has supplemented, if not fully supplanted, the traditional and well-founded (i.e., historical) opposition of Jefferson to Alexander Hamilton, high priest of mercantile capital and the Federal power its possessors found useful. In the middle decades of the twentieth century, Jefferson was co-opted by social conservatives like the Southern Agrarians, by devious ("state's rights") segregationists, and by opponents of federal intervention in our economy on behalf of the majority of citizens; and Jackson became the complementary proto-New Dealer for the antagonists of such groups.

But both the co-optation of Jefferson and the antagonists' response did violence to Jefferson's manifest democratic commitment. The compound myth opposing him and Jackson is pertinent here because the true contrast between the two is that Jackson was a democratic populist, while Jefferson was a democratic aristocrat: an advocate of according "public trust" to "worth and genius," which can derive "from every condition of life." The contrast is between a commitment to (the) people just as they are, and one to both *'oi aristoi*—the best among us—and *'o aristos*—the best in us: a commitment to the human potential of humans.

Historically, populism has produced not only movements for tolerance, political equality and social democracy like Andrew Jackson's, but their opposite. During our own era, the "Christian crusade" of Father Charles Coughlin (the "radio priest") and the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan coincide with the co-optation of Jefferson and responsive proffering of Jackson; the Klan and related hate groups, the Moral Majority, and Lyndon Larouche's organization (originally the United States Labor Party) are populist movements today. For some people are (as they are) beset by bigotry, chauvinism and resentment.

The political power of populism is the reason why not the simplistic and increasingly dated cold-war dystopia of Orwell's 1984, but Huxley's *Brave New World*, embodies the true prophetic warning for contemporary civilization. For in

Huxley's *New World*, technology enables the rulers to extrapolate demagoguery—the manipulative appeal to people as they are—from the primitive Roman formula of bread and circuses, into a comprehensive system of satisfying people as they are, and keeping them so. Not a system of harsh tyranny, but one of benign control—making humans perpetually satisfied in their undeveloped state—is the true social/political threat to our civilization. That true threat constitutes, more effectively and permanently than tyranny ever could, a denial of the humanist ethos that we are worthy and capable—the ethos of Jefferson the aristocratic democrat.

III. Our (Minds') Champion

In his description in the letter to Adams of "a bill for the more general diffusion of learning," Jefferson's emphasis is on the general concern of the letter with the role of class in government; but when he made his unsuccessful bid—initiated in the very year our country began, and formalized three years later, in 1779—to establish a system of public education at all levels, and absolutely free, he wrote about it in a way that recalls the peculiar phrase he had recently used, the phrase I believe asserts the humanist ethos. In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, the book he wrote on retiring as Virginia's Governor in 1781, he promotes his "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge" of 1779:

The general objects of this [proposed] law are to provide an education adapted to the years, to the capacity, and the condition of every one, and directed to their freedom and happiness. (147)

It is true that he goes on to provide a practical public rationale for his radical scheme for humanist "mental cultivation":

we hope to avail the state of those talents which nature has sown as liberally among the poor as the rich, but which perish without use, if not sought for and cultivated. —But of all the views of this law none is more important, none more legitimate, than that of rendering the people the safe, as they are the ultimate, guardians of their own liberty ... Every government degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone. The people themselves therefore are its only safe depositories. And to render even them safe their minds must be improved to a certain degree. (148)

But the humanist ethos is central to Jefferson's very practicality; for his (public) practical justification for developing human capability is the worth of "the people

themselves." And in private he reveals the even more consummately humanist vision his *Declaration* had called "the pursuit of Happiness."

An apt starting point for showing the meaning of his phrase is a letter he wrote in 1803, in which he refers to the Renaissance:

on [i.e. sic] the revival of letters, learning became the universal favorite, and with reason; because there was not enough of it existing to manage the affairs of a nation to the best advantage, nor to advance its individuals to the happiness of which they were susceptible ... (Nov. 14, to David Williams)

In 1786 he had written to the colleague and long-time friend who co-sponsored his radical bill for universal public education:

I think by far the most important bill in our whole code is that for the diffusion of knowledge among the people. No other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom and happiness. Preach, my dear Sir, a crusade against ignorance. (Aug. 13, to George Wythe)

He repeats that phrase, "freedom and happiness," in the letter to Adams. "The people" here, "every one" in that letter, as both public citizens and private humans, are both valuable and capable; and education is the "sure foundation" of both the citizen's freedom and therefore happiness and the person's development—refinement in the good sense—and therefore happiness.

Eventually, Jefferson relinquished his visionary campaign for a system of public education at all levels to concentrate on "an University." Free public education would have to wait for popular support, and for the industrial interests to realize they needed a labor force that could read. As we know, he got his University of Virginia.

In his "Report of the Commissioners," the detailed plan for the university he submitted to the Virginia legislature in 1818, five years after his letter to Adams, the old man was more explicit about the private happiness humans could pursue by developing their capability while its students; he did not have to emphasize practical benefits because the legislature had already voted to establish it. After listing the "objects" of education that concern first a (free male) person's conduct of his own practical affairs, and second the person's rights and duties as a citizen, Jefferson turns to a third and concluding set of "objects":

To develop the reasoning faculties of our youth, enlarge their minds, cultivate their morals, and instill into them the precepts of virtue and order;

To enlighten them with mathematical and physical sciences, which advance the arts, and administer to the health, the subsistence, and comforts of human life;

And, generally, to form them to habits of reflection and correct action, rendering them examples of virtue to others, and of happiness within themselves.

These are the objects of that higher grade of education, the benefits and blessings of which the Legislature now propose to provide ... (Honeywell 250)

Clearly, for Jefferson, happiness is no mere political good, no citizen's entitlement, but a state that has to be achieved, actively "pursued." And that the valuable and capable human works at/stalks/strives for Happiness by gaining access to education, is here almost explicit. Four years later, the old hero of democracy and education indivisible, because they are the joint and reciprocally sustaining means to Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness, articulated his doctrine; he was turning eighty:

I look to the diffusion of light and education as the resource most to be relied on for ameliorating the condition, promoting the virtue, and advancing the happiness of man ... And I do hope that, in the present spirit of extending to the great mass of mankind the blessings of instruction, I see a prospect of great advancement in the happiness of the human race; and that this may proceed to an indefinite, although not to an infinite degree. (Oct. 21, 1822, to C.C. Blatchly)

In certain respects at least, a great and good human. I have dwelt on the bridge, as I called it, that he provided for conveying forward to our own age the ethos of Humanism. The common thread connecting *Arts and Sciences* to *Liberal Arts*, and connecting both to *Humanism/Human*, is the essential meaning of each—the meaning they all share. All those familiar terms are signifiers of the development of mind—not training but truly educating, *ex ducere*, lead(ing) out—of the undeveloped human condition. In this sense, the humanities are not certain subjects of study, but any intellectual instruments and knowledge—arts and sciences—that develop humans' minds. Jefferson, history's great champion, I believe, both of the universal development of mind and of democracy, above all of them as inextricably interwound, declared the developing of mind to be "the pursuit of Happiness"—to be the purposing by which one's Happiness as a citizen and as a person will be achieved: secured. And he proclaimed the opportunity to develop our minds the central one of the three basic human rights—the justification for human Life, and indispensable to human Liberty.

It would be proper today to call Jefferson's opportunity to pursue "Happiness,"

to realize one's potential as person and as citizen, individual empowerment; for it is the most intrinsic human empowerment. But we cannot today, after the twentieth century and the beginning of our century have shown us what evil our species is capable of, share Jefferson's optimism about society. Surrounded by young people who can neither read nor figure adequately—think of their rage over having spent twelve years of days in classrooms; think of their fear of entering, so unprepared for it, the responsible adult world—with such young people all around us, we also cannot today share his optimism about the effects of public education. Yet we can continue to share with him, and act out of, the humanist ethos that people are valuable and capable. The humanist ethos transmuted the medieval structure for learning (human development) even as it controverted medieval cosmology, stimulating the discovery and rediscovery that began modern civilization. Then, after centuries, Jefferson articulated the implications of that ethos for democracy and education, asserted the (symbiotic) indispensability of each to the worthy-and-capable, and championed the human right to development as their joint fulfillment. I propose now to emphasize two consequences of the humanist ethos of special relevance today. Finally, I shall identify what I believe to be the radical—indeed subversive—third consequence we must progress to tomorrow.

IV. Today

The simpler of the two is an implication of "happiness" in Jefferson's sense that goes back to the classical roots of Humanism. Plato maintained that the use of mind gives to a human power over reality; and Aristotle maintained that the activity of learning, of gaining that power, imparts pleasure. Every few years during my adult life we have had another President's Commission on Education. The reports of these commissions have been progressively more somber and the proposed remedies more ambitious. But not once in this sequence of earnest and prodigious and well-meaning documents has there been included, among the important advantages to be realized by America's economy, by the society at fortunate ("happy") large, or even by the more well-educated individual her- or himself, the tremendously important—as the most fully human, the most important—advantage of more effective education, which is to say, of more effectively promoting the use of the mind. The neglected advantage is that using one's mind is an *exercise* of power that *gives* one pleasure. It seems to be a basic human appetite, like the sex drive. To every true humanist, the fact that it affords pleasure is obvious. The pleasure they found in the use of their minds is what motivated most academics to go on to graduate school. When I did so, academic salaries were—in constant dollars—about a third what they are today. The money spent on my education in

college and graduate school—by my parents, my universities, and me—if simply deposited in a savings bank instead, would have gathered to itself almost as much in interest as I could earn by my work at the end of the process. And most of my contemporaries in graduate school were aware of that absurd fact about themselves. Today, the humanist ethos requires those aware of the power and attendant pleasure to share their knowledge—with the Presidents' Commissions and with the young subjects of the Commissions' concern.

The gifted teacher who created a championship chess team in a ghetto school in Philadelphia exactly twenty-five years ago is among those who know the use of the mind is an exercise of power affording pleasure. His gift consisted in his ability to impart that knowledge to his pupils. Those under-privileged African-American boys and girls did not become chess champions because of the posters in buses listing how much more money a high school graduate would earn throughout his or her life than a dropout, how much more still a college graduate would earn. Rather, they came to share—he had graced them with—the humanist appetite for the pleasure afforded by the use of the mind.

And the use of the mind is simultaneously the development of mind. Development and performance—which is to say, accomplishment, achievement—are reciprocals. Development enables achievement; achievement advances development: each causes the other; each requires the other. That gifted teacher and those lucky children lead into the second consequence for today of the humanist ethos.

In our studies, our libraries and laboratories, members of my profession realize the power and pleasure of mind. But that private Happiness is the individual dimension of Humanism. All four meanings of *humanity*: having to do with people (the first two); compassion (the third); and learning and intellectual development (the fourth), converge to identify what I believe always has been the most fully humanist endeavor in the *social* dimension of Humanism—the vital humanist mission that is the second consequence of the ethos having special relevance today. The mission always has been to develop—and today it is increasingly to rescue—the capability of the minds of those worthy who are young.

Teaching today is more difficult than ever for academics, even at the favored colleges, which can select to an extent from among the children of relatively well-off families, able to provide more taxes or tuition payments for schooling. It is more difficult because in America's schools today, many of the children of the privileged are subtly being burdened with impediments to the pursuit of Happiness that were once imposed only on many of the children of the underprivileged. That extension of bad education to the young of their own class is one reason why establishment right-wingers have become concerned. (No doubt, the traditional interest in preparing the requisite work force is another reason. A third also relative to working people may be that unemployment is useful to inhibit their

expectations and power only if the unemployed are employable.) The solutions of the right wing range from silly to pernicious; but America *is* victimizing its young, even though William Bennett and the late Allan Bloom have said so.

Having mentioned the concern of the right wing, I must provide an important clarification. When I pinned on my McGovern button in 1972, a student said to me, "Gee, Mr. Sultan, I thought you'd be for [George] Wallace." "Wallace" may have been hyperbole (it may not); but she was associating a certain politics with my attitude toward a teacher's obligations and a student's needs. Unfortunately, the association was not completely arbitrary; for during that time, an academic's attitude toward the traditional educational enterprise correlated strongly with his or her legitimation of the received culture as a whole. "The counter-culture" was a good name for our American version of one of the stronger romantic pendulum swings in recent Western history. For us, two conditions peculiar to our American society added their considerable weight to the complex of social and political orthodoxies/proprieties also being rejected in other countries: our national toleration of institutional racism in the South; and our arrogant adventure with prolonged brutality in southeast Asia. Our American combination seemed to many a total received culture—including its educational institutions. However, while romantic ("Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books," Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned," 1798), and counter-cultural, the rejection at that time of educational rigor no more has a real correlation with serious and thoughtful Left politics than it has a logical correlation. True radicals have always distinguished extending education from denaturing it ("popularizing" it in that sense).

To document this briefly, I quote first from a historical figure whose Left credentials are beyond question, a founder of the Italian Communist Party who died in one of Mussolini's prisons, and then from a contemporary socialist. In his *Prison Notebooks*, Antonio Gramsci directly addresses the relation between educational standards and Left politics.

First, he attacks a specific curriculum change sponsored by Mussolini's "progressive" Minister of Education, the idealist philosopher Giovanni Gentile—by invoking the humanist tradition:

In the old school the grammatical study of Latin and Greek, together with the study of their respective literatures and political histories, was an educational principle—for the humanistic ideal ... was an essential element of national life and culture ... Individual facts were not learnt for an immediate practical or professional end. The end ... was the interior development of personality ... Pupils ... learnt (Latin and Greek) in order to be themselves and know themselves ... Latin and Greek were learnt through their grammar, mechanically; but the accusation of formalism and aridity is very unjust and inappropriate. In education one is

dealing with children[,] in whom one has to inculcate certain habits of diligence, precision, poise (even physical poise), ability to concentrate on specific subjects, which cannot be acquired without the mechanical repetition of disciplined and methodical acts. (37)

From his defense of rigorous Liberal Arts ("intellectual instruments"), Gramsci turns, echoing Jefferson, to the interplay between social class, democracy and education:

The traditional school was oligarchic because it was intended for the new generation of the ruling class, destined to rule in its turn ... [E]ach social group had its own type of school, intended to perpetuate a specific traditional function, ruling or subordinate. If one wishes to break this pattern one needs ... to create a single type of formative school (primary-secondary) which would take the child ... forming him during this time as a person capable of thinking, studying, and ruling—or controlling those who rule ... Political democracy tends towards a coincidence of the rulers and the ruled (in the sense of government with the consent of the governed), ensuring for each non-ruler a free training in the skills and general technical preparation necessary to that end. (40-41)

Finally, Gramsci observes, "Wider participation in secondary education brings with it a tendency to ease off the discipline of studies, and to ask for relaxations," (42), and explicitly asserts the need for rigor in egalitarian education:

The child who sweats at [classical logic] is certainly performing a tiring task, and it is important that he does only what is absolutely necessary and no more. But it is also true that ... the pupil has, in effect, to undergo a psycho-physical training ... Undoubtedly the child of a traditionally intellectual family acquires this psycho-physical adaptation more easily ... [H]e concentrates more easily, since he is used to "sitting still," etc. ... (Even diet has its importance, etc.) ... In the future ... it will be necessary to resist the tendency to render easy that which cannot become easy without being distorted. If our aim is to produce a new stratum of intellectuals from a social group which has not traditionally developed the appropriate attitudes, then we have unprecedented difficulties to overcome. (42-43)

That the Left's defense of educational standards persists unchanged is neatly documented in an assertion Irving Howe made two decades ago in "What Should We Be Teaching?," an article in *Dissent*:

The central tradition of socialism, which includes Marxism in its more humane versions, has always declared that the culture of the past ... ought to form a common

human heritage and that a deeply objectionable aspect of class societies is that they deprive large segments of the population of proper access to that culture. Democratic theories of education have stressed diffusion, not dilution. (479)

Both the early EuroCommunist and the near-contemporary Democratic Socialist share the humanist ethos with Jefferson, and so they share his profoundly democratic (to use that popular populist word) elitism; it is a doctrine of more general superiority.

I have called the schooling of far too many of today's young people bad not inadequate, victimization not neglect, because what is being done is more difficult to cope with, and more damaging, than inadequate preparation would be. Historically, even selective American colleges have always had to cope with inadequately prepared young people—to train them up in thinking, in written discourse, in mathematics, to develop their knowledge of history, of science, of literature, to introduce them to philosophy. That is why, alone among advanced nations, we Americans do not offer medical and legal training as undergraduate programs.

But the current schooling is victimizing because instead of just failing to prepare far too many young Americans who go on to college, it positively subverts their ability to learn. That is to say it *disempowers* them, deprives them of their right—said by Jefferson to be precisely unalienable—to pursue Happiness. It deprives them in at least three ways. It denies them a chance to become capable of working hard, to become capable of enduring disappointment when the product of casual work is judged unsatisfactory, and to become aware that education is not just an occasion for performance, but a process of development as well: it denies them a chance to become aware that *their intellectual ability* is not *fixed*. Of course, all three forms of victimization are related, a single complex deprivation. Having been brought up to believe they were accomplishing without having developed, young people are unprepared for failing to achieve, and they have an inadequate sense of their potential for the intellectual development that causes achievement.

This inadequate sense is why, recently, a freshman student said to me aloud in class, when I returned a paper, "I am not a D student." I answered that I had evaluated only her paper, and she wrote a D paper. But my heart went out to that girl approaching adulthood so imposed on—made to believe human minds are fixed from birth, like grades of eggs. And I spent a good part of that class period trying to explain to the students the enterprise they and I were jointly engaged in.

Readers who share the humanist ethos should be concerned about the context of that student's reaction to her grade, I think: about what is called "grade inflation" in colleges today. The essential problem is not that B now means what C meant, A what B meant, that the value of grades has undergone a kind of currency devaluation; for merely a change in what grades signify would not be terribly

important in the endeavor to develop students' minds. The problem is that the metaphor "grade inflation" is a false description of a more fundamental change. The true change is that too often it is not B work that is graded A, but a new sort of A work. In the classes where they occur, the new high grades are indeed earned—by the highly satisfactory accomplishment of an intellectual task so easy that students will achieve what is asked relatively fully. And if a student can readily perform what a teacher asks of her or him, the development that student's mind must undergo for him or her to achieve what is difficult will just not happen. As in so many of the lower schools, students victimized by what is erroneously called "grade inflation" are misled into believing they are accomplishing without having developed. What is at issue is not just the cheapening of transcripts, but something immeasurably more important: it is the betrayal of the humanist ethos that people are worthy and capable.

Again, a personal experience will convey the human dimension of what can seem abstract. A while back a senior about to begin graduate study in one of the country's most distinguished history departments, a young woman with whom I had argued for two years on a faculty committee on which she was the student representative, and whom I had come to respect, showed me a very long paper just returned to her by another faculty member. There was not one word of comment on its scores of pages until, at the end, the professor had written "Very good, A." That student said to me, with tears in her eyes, "I know what's wrong with this paper."

Her professor was not a humanist. For in being contemptuous of the human worth and the developmental capability of the student, the (fairly well-known) humanist scholar had betrayed the humanist ethos in its social dimension, failed to be a teacher. The student had been more fortunate with enough of her professors to possess, have been given—truly gifted, graced (like the young chess players) with—the development of mind during her four years in the college of my university. The instruments of grace were those among her professors who were teachers—shared the humanist commitment to developing young minds.

V. Tomorrow

The subversive third, social, consequence of the humanist ethos I believe we must progress to, also was adumbrated by Jefferson and the Enlightenment philosophers he read. In 1972, in the first annual "Thomas Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities" in Washington, D.C., during which he spoke of the mind's "freedom and power" and its "delight in itself," Lionel Trilling said that Jefferson "held the view, which was characteristic of the eighteenth century, that men were essentially equal in their mental faculties" (1381). As Trilling explained, by equality those

thinkers meant that all men possess reason.

Earlier I called equality an elusive good, and the meaning of "equal" here will need pinning down. But I take literally the Enlightenment description of "men" as "essentially equal in their mental faculties." The humanist ethos transmuted the medieval structure for learning by expanding humans' sense of reality and capability. Then Jefferson articulated the implications of that ethos for democracy and education. Nevertheless, Jefferson believed some (*oi aristoi*) are distinguished by greater "worth and genius." I am proposing a fourth stage in the Western conception of mind and its development: our accepting the literal equality of almost all the humanly worthy and capable.

The Western conception of mind and its development has evolved from Medieval Christian cosmology and the Trivium and Quadrivium; through Renaissance discovery and rediscovery; to the Enlightenment—Jeffersonian—corollaries, democracy and education. I believe the future realization that we humans are essentially equal in our intellectual capability will constitute the successor bridge to Jefferson's from the Renaissance, in the evolution of our humanist civilization. By "essentially equal" I mean that *almost* all humans are *literally* equal. There always have been unexpectedly and unexplainably gifted people, from great thinkers and artists to potential MacArthur Fellows. But those true exceptions are few in number.

At this point, the reader's opinion probably is that Sultan is mistaking a rickety pier for a bridge—that my conviction is foolish, although it shows I'm a nice person. I shall defend my radical thesis—as radical as Jefferson's basis for advocating universal education was in his time—by drawing three distinctions. They are: the distinction between intellectual capability and what is called "intelligence"; that between potential and realized human attributes; and that between equality and identity.

Biology has been a major if not the chief accomplice, at least since the 1920s, in the political and social crimes against humanity that have blighted our civilization. To call a child's ethnicity genetic and send her or him to a factory for murdering people is bad biology in the service of political crime. It is not bad biology to describe the melanin content of a person's skin as genetic; but to associate so-called intelligence with a person's inherited melanin content is bad biology in the service of political and social crime until the Civil Rights movement, and continuing social crime since. The biological error is the concept of a single genetic—which is to say heritable—entity called "intelligence" that can be measured by a so-called "intelligence quotient."

In 1974, in a book whose title echoes what I've been saying, *The Science and Politics of I.Q.*, the psychologist Leon J. Kamin thoroughly discredited the evidence purporting to prove the heritability of intelligence as measured by I.Q., including the extensive evidence of the principal advocate of heritable intelligence, Sir Cyril

Burt. It was two years after Kamin's book was published that, some readers will recall, Burt's data was proven fraudulent. Of I.Q. itself, Kamin wrote:

those who have been trained to answer the kinds of questions asked by I.Q. tests have been trained to succeed in our society ... To assert that [others] have defective genes is not a conclusion of science. The social function of such an assertion is transparently obvious. The successful are very likely to believe it, including successful professors. (176)

In *The Mismeasure of Man*, Stephen Jay Gould has a lot of fun quoting early twentieth century psychometricians who were alarmed that the hordes of stupid Jews pouring into Ellis Island from eastern Europe would debase our national intelligence level. A generation later, Jewish men were considered too smart. In this student generation, the Jews are like most others, and the hot groups are African-American women and East Asians. Gould also points out that in England, where class has exceptional importance, I.Q. studies have been used to prove the genetic difference in intelligence between the lower and middle classes, while in America, where we have other priorities, God help us, such studies have been used to prove the genetic difference in intelligence between the supposedly binary black and white races.

If the Quotient is mismeasure, if I.Q. is more politics than science, what of Intelligence itself? Kamin, Gould, and most people who today study what I have called the use of mind agree that the concept Intelligence is what Francis Bacon called an "Idol of the Theatre," that we humans are endowed not with a single entity, a big I, but with clearly differentiable mental faculties, separate intellectual capabilities, for memory, cognition, invention and so on. My first distinction is between our actual plurality of capabilities and a single "Intelligence," which cannot be legitimately hypostatized.

Each of us has a particular combination of intellectual capabilities, as each has a particular profile of the different physical capabilities—coordination, endurance, muscular strength and so on. And we are born with both sets of profiles as *potentials* (for development). How wrong it is to fail to appreciate the importance of that fact of potentiality, as my freshman student had been brainwashed into doing, can be illustrated very easily. The illustration involves my second distinction, that between potential and realized human attributes.

Over half a century ago, I read an article purporting to prove—biologically, I dare say; I don't remember much about it—that for a human to run a mile in four minutes was a physical impossibility. Two or three years later, Roger Bannister did it; and now a runner who cannot beat his time does not qualify to join an Olympic squad. That physical development originated in a positive stimulus, Bannister's

proof to runners that the achievement, the realization of (hence) potential, is possible (from the same Latin root, *potis*). An example of a *mental* development originating in a *negative* stimulus is the well-known fact that the only category of SAT scores not declining in recent years is that of girls on the quantitative test. The stimulus is negative because it consists in American girls' no longer being told—in the many silent ways judgments about intellectual capability are declared in (and outside) our schools—that female humans cannot do math. Both examples illustrate how foolish it is to prejudice human potential for development.

My third and last distinction is that between equality and identity. Voters with different degrees of political wisdom or of conscientiousness as citizens are nonetheless politically equal. Litigants who are more and less just or honest are (ostensibly) equal before the law. But the franchise and the law are social artifacts, so for them the equality of even the far-from-identical can simply be declared. In contrast, intellectual capability is an attribute of individual humans. If intellectual capability is a *composite* of capabilities, not only is identity between individual composites essentially impossible: there will rarely even be similarity. In what sense are dissimilar intellects equal?

Of course, the dissimilar are not necessarily unequal: four quarters equal the very dissimilar dollar bill in the most essential quality of each. The analogy is crude; but my radical thesis is that while the profiles we are born with will almost always be dissimilar, at *birth* almost every particular unimpaired profile of intellectual capabilities—almost every particular composite of potentials for development—is essentially equal to almost every dissimilar other.

My thesis cannot embrace the profiles of humans born genetically impaired: inadequate pre-natal nutrition or many drugs or Downs syndrome will affect intellectual capability (as will post-natal biological conditions like the ingestion of lead paint, or—to repeat Gramsci's point—poor nutrition). And my thesis does not dispute the evidence of genetic determinants of *specific* intellectual capabilities, from early identical-twin studies (when reliable), to recent findings that men and women tend to differ in specific intellectual capabilities (for example, spatial reasoning and verbal facility), and that menstruating women tend to differ in specific capabilities at different phases of their respective cycles. But all genetically-caused differences—dissimilarities—in intellectual capability are beside the point, irrelevant: my thesis is not that almost all our profiles of capability are similar at birth but that, however dissimilar, they are essentially equal.

I maintain our profiles at birth cannot be proven unequal for two reasons. The obvious impediment to any proof is the radical uncertainty created by what happens to each of us after birth. There are lead paint and malnutrition; on the other hand, for example, the pre-school Head Start program for poor children has proven so effective in increasing their ability to learn that even the Reagan

and both Bush administrations retained it. The second reason is a more subtle, but logical and therefore more absolute, impediment. If we were to disregard the significant consequences of those things that happen after birth to humans born unimpaired, we could measure separately each component *realized* mental capability in any individual's profile. But measuring the different capabilities is not what is required. We must demonstrate that whole *profiles* are unequal. And to derive a single measure for our various composites of capabilities would require formulating criteria for giving a particular weight—that is to say, *assigning a value*—to each component capability.

Since all evaluation is by nature arbitrary—dependent on criteria which are in the realm of judgment, not of fact—those value-judgments, the chosen criteria for formulating a measure of general intellectual capability, do nothing more than reflect what mental activities—hence, particular capabilities in any profile—are thought to be of greater and what of lesser importance. (Even measuring certain individual intellectual capabilities, such as “verbal skill,” requires assigning relative weight—value—to many different components of that “skill.”) Of course, some intellectual capabilities have more practical utility than others, as great skill at basketball is more useful than great skill at field sports like discus throwing and pole-vaulting. But practical utility is not an intrinsic value. An unconscious demonstration of the legitimacy of my position is the fact that women's variant profiles of capability at different phases of their menstrual cycles is not construed as altered *total* intellectual capability: what would be a manifestly arbitrary expression of value judgments respecting the same individual is no less arbitrary respecting different individuals.

My claim is that no one can objectively demonstrate the non-equality at birth of almost all unimpaired people's intellectual profiles. The contingent and possibly superable impediment to any such demonstration is the role of what happens to a person after birth. But the logical and I maintain therefore insuperable impediment is that any attempted demonstration of our non-equality is grounded in *a priori* value judgments about the relative importance of—weight to be assigned—each different intellectual capability, and so is a subtle form of question-begging. One's criteria tell more about *oneself* than about another's intellectual capability. In other words, one is back in the world of I.Q.

I propose that the burden of proof is on those who consider well-nourished and healthy infant humans unequal in their undoubtedly far from identical profiles of intellectual capability. I propose that my position is not only nice, but the proper humanist position unless and until it is proven mistaken.

The *moral* value of postulating the equality of human intellectual capability in the absence of viable contrary evidence is apparent: it avoids possible injustice. Its *practical* value is the significant positive effect it would have on the development

(education) of young humans. I mentioned above the contrary effect on girls' attempts to do math of the silent declaring that they lacked the intellectual capability. A number of studies have established the profound influence of expectation on intellectual achievement (development). The 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education* pointed out precisely this consequence of "separate but equal" schooling. "A Class Divided," a 1983 Public Television documentary, portrays how a gifted Iowa teacher taught racial tolerance to her white third-grade pupils. Every year for a few days she would divide the class into blue-eyed and brown-eyed groups, and would favor, and assert the superiority of, each group in turn. But in addition to enabling those children to experience the life of the contemned and the discriminated-against, she experimented. Consistently, the performance on intellectual tasks of each group, relative both to the other and to itself when its status later was reversed, corresponded to the treatment of it. Furthermore, the *subsequent* intellectual achievement of the children in both groups was higher than it had been before the class was divided; it corresponded to the level achieved when the children's group was the favored and esteemed one: treated as especially capable, they had discovered their capability.

In addition to its moral and its practical consequences, postulating intellectual equality would have profound social and political implications: it is because of those implications that my thesis is subversive. I have insisted on the metaphor of Jefferson's *bridge* between the Renaissance and today, to emphasize the impediment to democracy and education over which he provided the means of passage. His letter to Adams makes crystal clear that the impediment was the belief, imported from Europe and general in his time, in the legitimacy of a hereditary elite.

The supposed legitimacy, the basis for that ruling class's claim to privilege and power, was—once more—biological. Today we not only mock, but are almost baffled by, the belief in blue blood—in genetic aristocracy—that dominated Western civilization for many centuries. And yet one can imagine the rejoinder to a person in the sixteenth or seventeenth century who questioned that superstition now so baffling but once so convenient to those privileged by it. The laboring low-born in their cottages and flats as well as the leisured, cultivated high-born in their manors and town houses, the lady's maid as well as the lady, the peasant as well as his master, would say to that skeptical person, "Look around you; the evidence is overwhelming." Of course, we now know the evidence was not evidence.

In our own state of civilization, privilege and power go to those who perform intellectual work. The lawyer makes more money in a day than her or his secretary in a week; the surgeon makes more in a morning than the orderly in a month. There are exceptions, of course. The surgical nurse performs intellectual work for very little privilege and power—but she's usually a woman. The corporate C.E.O. may not have a law degree or even an M.B.A.—but he or she makes money for

others. Finally, in our market economy some individuals accumulate privilege and power for themselves, though rarely from truly moneyless backgrounds. There are exceptions; but the structure of our society is such that privilege and power go preponderantly to those who have been prepared to do intellectual work. And this situation is largely independent of considerations of merit. Perceived merit among engineers is rewarded differently from perceived merit among mechanics, even by an employer who once was, or still partly is, a mechanic.

Because class is a dirty little secret in our country ("The three most important considerations are location, location, and location," the agent tells the prospective "home" buyer), we Americans are amused to learn that in 1940, when the R.A.F. may have saved our civilization, a Flight Lieutenant was a pilot who went to University and a Sergeant Pilot was one who did not (and that the uniform jacket of the former had a white silk lining while that of the latter had no lining). But there also is an arbitrary class dimension (that is, crude snobbery) to our American intellectual credentials. My brother-in-law, who began with his regional telephone company as a lineman, and became an executive, frequently confronted resentment and harassment because he never went beyond high school; he owed his advancement into the ranks of the college-degreed to a historical accident: new communications technology, which he mastered and many of his degreed peers did not. The same crude snobbery is moved one step higher in academic administration, where an advanced degree—it may be both meretricious and irrelevant—usually is a requirement for higher-level appointments.

In all societies, inequality in advantages derives from the general assumption that those advantages recognize superior worth. In our own society, this general assumption is no silly superstition about the special virtues of blue blood. If asked what its basis is, I think most people would say the more worthy are rewarded for their individual accomplishments, and for doing work, often requiring expensive education, that society values highly. Beliefs general in a society usually have a measure of truth; and usually they are less true (more superstitious) than they appear to members of—from a perspective circumscribed by—that society. Despite snobbery and other follies, this belief about the basis of special advantages seems to have a measure of truth, though of course I say so as a member of our society.

But I think not enough truth. And in any case it is only the belief people are most aware of. From my perspective I am proposing as the preponderant basis of our social inequality a very different general belief, though the difference is expressed by the addition of one three-letter word. This very different and largely unconscious general belief is that only certain people *can* undergo the education, do the valued work, accomplish. It is, in other words, a belief in what we consider a self-evident fact: the inequality of humans' *intrinsic* intellectual capability. And

as the night follows the day, this general assumption leads to the assumption that privilege and power are the profoundly just and sensible complement to certain humans' manifestly superior capability—always acknowledging, of course, that in an imperfect world a minority of people with the potential to be superior are victimized by circumstances. Is that intellectual superiority really manifest? "Look around you; the evidence is overwhelming," any one of us might say. To quote Kamin on I.Q., "The successful are very likely to believe it, including successful professors."

Maybe this belief in unequal intellectual capability, even among those who have abandoned the concept of intelligence with a capital I, maybe this foundation stone of power and privilege in our society, as azure blood was in the previous society, is not a convenient superstition. Maybe despite my logic it is possible to devise for the great majority of humans a sensible and just evaluation of profiles of intellectual capability, and thereby to demonstrate that the profiles at birth of our potentials for developed capabilities really are unequal. I will not ask the reader to be persuaded otherwise by what I have written. But in the absence (not to speak of unlikelihood) of any such sensible and just evaluation, I ask that my thesis be considered seriously. Since we do not know what the truth is, the only fair—that is to say, just—thing to do until the truth can be ascertained is to treat everyone as though almost all of us *are* equal. For so far, the evidence is not evidence. And this means that so far any belief, including the general belief, is a presumption. Fellow human, mine is the more humanist presumption. ■■

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