

THE  
SPIRIT  
OF CITIES

Why the Identity of a City Matters in a Global Age  
Daniel A. Bell and Avner de-Shalit



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Matters in a Global Age

Daniel A. Bell and Avner de-Shalit

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The idea for this book came to us in early September 2001, when we were walking the streets of San Francisco (the official reason for the trip was a meeting of the American Political Science Association). We were struck by the charm of the city and speculated that it would be a good idea to walk the streets of different cities and write a book about our experiences. A few days later, however, terrorists struck in New York, and the plan was shelved. It seemed impossible to imagine that it would be possible to stroll in our favorite cities without fear of the world collapsing before our eyes.

Fortunately, we were too pessimistic, and the project was revived a few years later. At this stage we had read a lot on strolling as a method of research, and we encountered much enthusiasm and encouragement. Hence, we would like to thank the generous support of the Max Kampelman Chair for Democracy and Human Rights at the Hebrew University, the Lady Davis Fellowship (which allowed Daniel to spend two months in Jerusalem), as well as the Department of Philosophy at Tsinghua University in Beijing and the Institute of Arts and Humanities at Jiaotong University in Shanghai. We are also grateful to the East Asian Institute in Singapore for supporting Daniel's stay in Singapore longer than was strictly necessary. We wish also to express our thanks to three very energetic and helpful research assistants, Orly Peled, Alon Gold, and Nimrod Kovner, and to Emilie Frenkiel, Marie-Eve Reny, and Kevin Tan, who helped us to secure photos for the book.

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## INTRODUCTION

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### CIVICISM

In the Western tradition, political thinking first emerged as a comparison of different cities and the values they expressed. Ancient Athens represented democracy and faith in the judgment of ordinary people (with the exception of slaves and women) whereas Sparta represented a more oligarchic model, with well-disciplined citizen-soldiers (and relatively powerful women) striving for the glory of the state. Different political thinkers took sides and derived inspiration from these competing models to develop their own theories of political rule. Plato may have been favorably inclined toward Sparta whereas Aristotle, arguably, had a more balanced view of democratic rule and saw some virtues in the Athenian way. A third city—Jerusalem—called into question the concern for this-worldly political success: the ultimate purpose of life is to worship God. Three great monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—were to lay claim to Jerusalem as symbolizing religious values.<sup>1</sup>

Around the same time that Greek city-states were at their peak, the country that came to be known as China was divided into different warring states that competed for political supremacy. The capitals of the seven leading powers were walled cities that dwarfed earlier Chinese cities: each had a population of one hundred thousand or more. The cities were bureaucratically organized for the purpose of registering, taxing, and conscripting the people of the state, but not all cities developed a military or political ethos: for example, the twin cities that made up the Zhou dynasty's capital at Louyang flourished as a commercial metropolis. Political thinkers and strategists roamed from city to city with different ideas for making the country strong and secure, and the main schools of Chinese social and political thinking emerged out of the ferment of ideas in Warring States cities.<sup>2</sup> The theorists did all share the ideal of a unified world without territorial boundaries (in contrast to early Greek thinkers, who argued for the virtues of small states), but they had radically different ideas about how to achieve it and what the end state would look like. Thinkers such as Confucius and Mencius tried to persuade rulers to rule in accordance with morality whereas the hard-nosed realists known as Legalists advocated rule by means of

harsh punishments. The Legalists had more immediate success with the king of Qin, who unified the country under his rule, assuming the title of First Emperor, but the subsequent Han dynasty gradually adopted Confucian principles. It would be only a slight exaggeration to describe the succeeding two thousand years of Chinese political history as a constant struggle between Legalism and Confucianism.

Does it make sense to think of cities as representing different political values in the modern world? In comparison with ancient Greek city-states and ancient Chinese walled cities, today's cities are huge, diverse, and pluralistic,<sup>3</sup> and it may seem peculiar to say that one city represents this or that. But just think of Jerusalem and Beijing: Can cities get any more different than those? Both cities are designed with a core surrounded by concentric circles, but one core expresses spiritual values and the other represents political power (not to mention that Beijing has a population twenty-nine times bigger than Jerusalem's). Clearly, some cities do express and prioritize different social and political values: what we can call an "ethos" or "spirit" of a city. *Ethos* is defined as the characteristic spirit, the prevalent tone of sentiment, of a people or community (Oxford English Dictionary). We apply this definition to cities throughout the book. More specifically, we define a city's ethos as a set of values and outlooks that are generally acknowledged by people living in the city.<sup>4</sup>

Cities reflect as well as shape their inhabitants' values and outlooks in various ways. The design and architecture of their buildings reflect different social and cultural values. Public monuments often mark politically significant episodes and different ways of honoring the dead. The extent of metropolitan sprawl and traffic reflects different assumptions about city versus rural life in the areas of population control and state planning versus the free market. The presence or absence of women in public streets reveals something about and influences conceptions of gender relations. As David Harvey has argued, the deterioration of many neighborhoods is closely related to issues of social justice and makes an impact on how people think about social justice.<sup>5</sup> The composition of communities and neighborhoods can either undermine or promote democracy and public participation. Ghettos reflect badly on the state of race relations. Theaters, stadiums, cafés, and restaurants are related to questions of lifestyle, hedonism, elite versus popular culture, and so on. Cities built for walking and bicycling versus those built for cars encourage and promote different values about sustainability.<sup>6</sup> Street signs are often written in more than one language, revealing different takes on multiculturalism and minority rights. The presence or absence of hospitals says something about concern for the body. The way ordinary citizens interact with one another and with outsiders reflects different values. Even (especially?) the conversation topics of taxi drivers says something



Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain.

Photograph © Gerard Lazaro. Courtesy of Shutterstock.

about the dominant ethos of a city. Despite what we hear about “globalization” and “homogenization,” there are often huge differences between different cities in these respects.

Now, it could be argued that there is a limit to how much planning, buildings, and architecture can shape a city’s ethos and the way its inhabitants reflect on life, but there are clear-cut cases of influence, such as the “Jerusalem syndrome,” in which tourists are so touched by the religious symbolism of the city’s streets and buildings that they believe they have metamorphosed into Jesus himself. Stalinist and fascist architecture often has the effect of dwarfing the individual, making it easier for the state to make people believe that they should submit to the state and its “great leader.” More positively, perhaps, awe-inspiring Gothic cathedrals such as Chartres can reinforce faith in a higher being (Napoleon famously said that the cathedral “makes atheists feel uneasy”). It is difficult not to be moved by the Taj Mahal, perhaps the world’s most beautiful testament to the power of love. Frank Gehry’s spectacular museum in Bilbao almost single-handedly changed the Spanish city from a declining industrial center into a mecca for tourism. The use of particular buildings to shape values is not always effective—the buildings of Geoffrey Bawa’s Parliament Island on the outskirts of Colombo combine Sinhalese, Buddhist, and Western features and are meant to convey the image of an ideal multicultural and tolerant Sri Lanka<sup>7</sup>—but over time and in the wider context of a city’s ethos, people can be shaped by their urban environment. As Charles Landry, the founder of Comedia (a think tank



promoting creative thinking in urban life) argues, the city's physical infrastructure makes an impact on the human dynamics of a place.<sup>8</sup>

City-based ethos also affect the way people evaluate cities. Consider the way we often make comparative judgments about the ways of life of different cities. People often say, "I love (Montreal, Beijing, Jerusalem, etc.)," and "I hate (Toronto, Shanghai, Tel Aviv, etc.)," almost as though cities were like people, with distinctive personalities. Typically speaking, an evaluation of a city's desirability is not just an aesthetic judgment; it is also a judgment about the moral ways of life of people in that city. Such judgments are often more strongly held than judgments about countries, which tend to be more abstract and imagined entities than cities are. For example, it would be strange for an educated person to say, "I love (Canada, China, Denmark, etc.)," and "I hate (France, Korea, Ethiopia, etc.);" we expect more nuanced judgments in such matters. But judgments made about cities do not seem so sweeping or morally problematic; it is often worth inquiring further into the reasons for such judgments, and on reflection we might well agree. Cities are also more open to outsiders' affection and identification. A foreigner is more apt to say, "I love Amsterdam," than "I love the Netherlands," and this identification is less likely to be seen as odd by locals.

Yet hardly anybody theorizes about such city-based judgments. In political theory, the debates tend to be about whether the whole world or particular nations should be the sites of normative theorizing. But why shouldn't people living in cities struggle to nourish and promote their particular ways of life in the political process? In political practice, cities are often sites of collective self-determination, but contemporary thinkers fail to theorize in ways designed to provide informed judgments about what's good and what's bad about urban pride.<sup>9</sup> In fact, it's hard to think of a word that even captures the idea of urban pride, the idea that residents of a city are proud of their way of life and struggle to promote its particular identity. Patriotism today refers to national pride, but what about feeling proud of being a member of the (Jerusalem, Beijing, Montreal, etc.) community? We nominate the word *civicism* to express the sentiment of urban pride.<sup>10</sup>

#### COSMOPOLITAN COMMUNITARIANISM

Why do we care about this topic? In Avner's case, the idea stemmed from his work on environmental theory. He began to question the assumption that the environment was always about "wilderness"—surely cities are part of the environment as well—and so he was one of a group of environmental theorists who started to work on cities. And since he had applied the method of creating environmental theory by letting the environment talk to and inspire the theorist, he

did a paper on New York, treating it as an environment that “talks” to the gentle stroller, revealing itself via monuments, buildings, city grids, and unexpected conversations with its inhabitants. The basic idea is to accumulate as much information as possible before firmly settling on research questions and theories. In the case of Daniel, he was talking to Avner about cities when it hit him: he had been moving from comparing civilizations (East Asia and the West) to countries (China and the United States); why not move further “down” to compare cities? To the extent that such comparisons are problematic because they tend to “essentialize” diverse units of analysis, maybe they become less problematic the further “down” one moves, given that the units of analysis become more and more concrete and “real.”<sup>11</sup> Plus, Daniel had been living in several different cities for extended periods of time and he was struck by their differences in terms of what they express and represent as social and political ways of life. Why not follow Avner’s model and theorize on the basis of lived experiences and sentiments?

As political theorists, we try to describe and explain social and political phenomena but we also try to think about implications of normative questions such as “What are morally justifiable forms of political life?” So here’s our agenda: our book is meant to counter the worry that in an age of globalization, social units have no political and economic will to oppose globalization.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps states are becoming more uniform, but cities may come to the rescue, so to speak. States often have to comply with international agreements and regulations and with the dictates of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Union, or simply the free market, which tends to diminish the role of particular cultures, values, and ways of life. In that sense, globalism has the effect of homogenizing cultures, transforming a variety of cultures into a single culture of consumerism, the result of which is a feeling of sameness and lessening of pluralism and diversity in cultural ideas and alternatives. Liberal theorists who defend the idea that states should be neutral between conceptions of the good life unintentionally add to the flattening of cultures by leaving no room for the state to nourish and support particular forms of life that are threatened by globalization.

But many people do want to experience particularity, to maintain and nurture their own cultures, values, and customs that they believe are constitutive of their identities, and without which their communal way of life would be substantially diminished. Hence, we want to suggest that cities have been increasingly the mechanism by which people oppose globalization and its tendency to flatten cultures into sameness. Many cities invest thought, time, and money in protecting their unique ethos and preserving it through policies of design and architecture and through the way people use the cities and interact with them. Arguably, not all cities do this, and some may simply surrender to the demands

of globalization. But the idea that cities can and should promote their particular ways of life does not arouse much controversy: even defenders of liberal neutrality at the level of the state tend to allow for the public expression of particularity at the level of cities. And surely it is no coincidence that cities with an ethos often have an international reputation and tend to attract visitors and residents who are drawn in large part by that ethos.

In short, an ethos contributes to the diversity that makes human social life so valuable and interesting. Partly, it's an aesthetic pleasure—different kinds of cities create a more beautiful human canvas. Partly, it's a moral case for diversity—different kinds of cities add to our possibilities of forms of social and political life. And sometimes cities can accomplish morally desirable aims more difficult to achieve at the level of the state: while the Chinese government seems averse to national projects for energy conservation such as binding caps on emissions, several cities in China compete for a “green” ethos by means such as the provision of tax subsidies for green technology (the city of Baoding is largely powered by solar energy) and the use of big events, such as a World's Fair in Shanghai, to promote electric vehicles. The same goes for India: New Delhi has converted all its buses and taxis to compressed natural gas. In the United States, San Francisco is revising its building code to require that new structures be wired for electric car chargers,<sup>13</sup> a policy that would be inconceivable at the national level.<sup>14</sup> Cities can also achieve other aims. The Chinese city of Chongqing is experimenting with alternative forms of property rights designed to promote relatively egalitarian forms of economic development.<sup>15</sup> In addition, cities with a similar ethos can sometimes communicate above (or below) the heads of national leaders in order to achieve shared goals, such as sharing ideas and expertise between cities committed to preserving traditional architecture.<sup>16</sup> And creative thinkers put forward city-based ideas for dealing with problems (for example, Paul Romer's proposal for “charter cities,” city-scale administrative zones governed by a coalition of countries that can help those cities break out of poverty traps).<sup>17</sup> What can't be done at the level of states to combat the “imperative” to remain competitive in an era of globalization can often be done at the level of cities.<sup>18</sup>

Of course, globalization also has a good side. It is often a synonym for the free movement of capital, humans, and goods, and an open-minded attitude to foreigners and the “other.” Who can object to the free flow of information, greater familiarity with distant peoples, a feeling of global solidarity, and the variety of economic opportunities that globalization can open up for historically marginalized peoples? Hence, we focus on cities whose ethos do not oppose openness and global solidarity; if the ethos is built around xenophobia, racism, or hatred, we are not interested. Berlin in its intolerant phase embraced the world's most monstrous regime, and we would not want to respect that

ethos. But once cities (and other social and political entities) pass a threshold of minimal human rights—basic material necessities (food, water, shelter) are secure and nobody is being tortured, murdered, enslaved, or systematically discriminated against—then there is a good *prima facie* case for respect of the prevalent ethos.

The case for respecting a city's ethos is best expressed by the proverb, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." For one thing, it can be psychologically destabilizing and expensive in terms of energy and money to change a city's ethos. But we want to suggest that there is a case for respecting a city's ethos even when we would normally object to the values that characterize that ethos.<sup>19</sup> If the ethos does not justify egregious human rights abuses and we believe it reflects the particular values of a city's inhabitants, that it shapes their collective identity, and that it helps to sustain diversity and plurality without being too exclusionary, then there is a strong case for respecting that ethos. For example, we might have less reason to criticize economic inequality in Hong Kong—a city that takes pride in its capitalist way of life—than in cities that place high value on economic equality.<sup>20</sup> Or consider this: the Singaporean government's claim that it is sometimes necessary to curtail a particular political right might sound dubious on first hearing, but we need to remain open to the possibility that constraints may be necessary to overcome poverty in states that lack a strong sense of national unity. Similarly, it may be justifiable to force shop owners in predominantly English-speaking parts of Montreal to put up French language signs, or for the city of Jerusalem to force shops (and the university!) to close on religious holidays.<sup>21</sup>

Still, we do not mean to imply that the dominant ethos should be respected no matter what the consequences. If it turns out that the dominant ethos is self-defeating—for example, that policies designed to promote nation building in Singapore have the opposite effect, or that religious fanaticism in Jerusalem tends to be collectively damaging to higher religious sensibilities—then criticism of the prevailing ethos may be justified. But such critical arguments can be made only on the basis of detailed local knowledge, that is, an informed account of how the disadvantages of particular interpretations of a collective ethos outweighs the advantages.

Let us address a possible misunderstanding. We do not mean to imply that everyone should be committed to a city with an ethos. Some people may prefer to live in homogenized communities where they can blend anonymously with the crowds (just as some people prefer "international" five-star hotels or McDonald's over charming hotels and restaurants with local characteristics).<sup>22</sup> Others may be happy living in neighborhoods that express particular characteristics even if the city as a whole is an incoherent mess. And perhaps some people are

attached to “characterless” cities just because they are born and bred there. That’s reasonable. But we are writing this book for those who do value cultural particularity and diversity, and who worry that globalism may work against that diversity. We do believe that many city residents share our point of view, but even if it’s a small minority or people we hope to keep the cause alive.

Nor do we mean to defend a value system that justifies commitment to only one kind of city or ethos. On the contrary, we believe that cosmopolitanism has many benefits and that it is possible to feel at home in several cities. Admittedly, our own personal experiences mesh with our normative outlooks: we feel rooted in more than one city. Daniel was raised in Montreal, did his graduate work in Oxford, worked in Singapore and Hong Kong, and now lives in Beijing. Avner was raised in Jerusalem and works there now, but he spent several years in Oxford and frequently returns for research and holidays and feels very much at home there. So each of us can identify with at least two cities’ ethoses, and perhaps some readers of this book will feel the same about two or more cities. Presumably there are limits to such attachments: one can’t feel a strong sense of belonging to an infinite number of communities.<sup>23</sup> But the fact that one can belong to several circles of communities implies that our moral outlook is not some narrow kind of communitarianism: we therefore describe it as “cosmopolitan communitarianism,” meaning that we allow for the possibility that our loyalties and interests can be extended to other cities. Hence, we also write about cities beyond our original “home communities.”<sup>24</sup>

### STROLLING AND STORYTELLING

This leads us to justify our choice of cities. We focus on cities that we can write about from personal experience; we draw on that experience to speak with a degree of confidence about the prevalent ways of social and political life of those cities, and we also show how our own lives and moral outlooks have been implicated—and changed, in some cases—by our experiences living in those cities. One can perhaps write compelling essays (or even books) about sports in Singapore or jazz in Jerusalem, but the large majority of residents in those cities can lead their lives entirely unaffected by such themes. In contrast, the dominant ethos tends to implicate, like it or not, the people living in those cities. Montrealers, almost without exception, must navigate the tricky linguistic politics of that city; Singaporeans are necessarily implicated in the city-state’s attempt to promote a common national identity; and it would be difficult to imagine a Jerusalemite not being made conscious of questions of religious identity.

Our choice of cities is also determined by more “objective” concerns. We chose cities that relate to key themes in contemporary political thinking; that

is, we try to show what can be learned about cities that express and prioritize themes such as the pursuit of economic wealth (Hong Kong) and ambition (New York). In other words, we choose cities that prioritize certain values and themes that lend themselves to philosophical speculation of social and political import.<sup>25</sup> Put negatively, we have left out cities that do not really seem to express dominant values, meaning that one has to think hard and argue about what that city is supposed to represent. For our purposes, the ethos of cities should be pretty obvious to anyone who knows anything about those cities.<sup>26</sup>

How do we get to know the ethos? As academics, we read a great deal about each city, including novels, poems, and tourist guides. We need to study each city's culture, sociology, economy, and design, as well as try to tell coherent historical narratives of how cities became what they are now. In principle, we should do our best to use "hard" science to write about values and cities. One way might be to draw on public opinion polls or values survey data, though such surveys tend to compare countries and larger regions, not cities.<sup>27</sup> Another marker of value prioritization would be to look at the distribution of resources in city budgets: one would expect a high share of the budget in Montreal to go to the protection of language, in Oxford to learning and culture, and so on. Perhaps the number of Google hits is one indication of prioritization; for example, "Jerusalem and religion" has nine million hits, compared to one million for "Jerusalem and romance" (though, to be frank, we do not expect such superficial indications to change our findings). Most important, perhaps, would be to draw on archival research and accounts of city planners who explain what values motivated what they did. We do rely on such methods to a certain extent, and we believe this kind of research is important and desirable.

In this book, however, we rely mainly on qualitative methods. We (re)visited the cities in our book and arranged interviews in advance with inhabitants of those cities (e.g., a college president in Oxford, a writer in Paris, a young political activist in Berlin). More controversially, perhaps, we also assume that much can be learned about cities and their values through strolling and spontaneous interviewing. In the past four years, we have been walking in the cities' streets, talking with their people, and listening to their buildings, monuments, streets, and neighborhoods as if they were talking to us. Avner was reassured of the worth of this method shortly after he was made dean: when he asked colleagues what he could do to better understand the needs of the faculty, he was advised to simply walk the corridors and randomly bump into people rather than sit in his office and wait for people to come to him. In this more "subjective" and less designed method of philosophizing, the city and its inhabitants serve as a source not only of information but also of inspiration. Cities inspire not just ideas, but also stories and sentiments, which in turn inspire ideas. This "strolling" method has

been particularly useful for researching cities that are not so constitutive of our identities, such as Paris and New York (in contrast, we can draw on a large stock of past personal experience to talk about Montreal and Jerusalem). Of course, there are also limits to strolling in sprawling and polluted cities such as Beijing.

Let us say a bit more about strolling. We are not the first social scientists or philosophers to employ strolling as a method of research. Most famously, Walter Benjamin (1898–1940) invoked the image of the *flâneur*—the person who walks long and aimlessly through the streets—as a way of examining the rise of capitalism, consumerism, and urbanism in nineteenth-century Paris. Benjamin studied the streets of Paris, especially the arcades—iron-and-glass-covered streets of shops—as a microcosm of modern society. While describing his strolling in the streets, he related, often in a manner of connotation or association, to works in history, culture, and sociology. Unlike many methods in sociology that highlight the detached researcher, Benjamin showed that the intimate knowledge, the “here and now” experience, is no less important for understanding social phenomena.<sup>28</sup>

In our case, we did not come equipped with firm hypotheses but instead let the cities inform us. As we were strolling, we deliberately tried to set aside our expectations and prejudices, remaining open to whatever happened to us and to the possibility that we might need to revise our preliminary views as to what the ethos of the city might be.<sup>29</sup> For example, it struck Daniel that Montreal might have reached the end state of its language wars when he observed that Montrealers now display more flags of the Montreal Canadiens hockey team than flags of Quebec and Canada. Our approach is therefore very similar to data-driven research, in which our growing understanding develops in a way that is driven by the data that we collect, quite randomly, by meeting people, seeing buildings, talking to people on the street, and interpreting events that happen to us. This data-driven research is often challenged nowadays because most researchers would rather engage in hypothesis-driven research. But we found that a visit to a graveyard, a chat with a shopkeeper, or a visit to the main train station can supply data that lead to new research questions and hypotheses. How did we choose which bits of information to collect? We accepted data that allowed us to draw a coherent picture of an ethos, in which each story is consistent with other stories and each bit of data has a place. For example, stories implying that Jerusalem is a city of harmony do not cohere with the fact that there are so many ethnic and religious clashes in Jerusalem, and therefore we rejected such stories.

Now, our argument can be challenged by the claim that states rather than cities have an ethos. Had we described only New York, Oxford, Beijing, and Jerusalem, this could be a plausible counterargument. But we do have separate chapters about the very different ethoses of Beijing and Hong Kong, two cities

in the same country. Moreover, in some of the chapters we write about the city comparing it to another city in the same country. We compare Oxford to Cambridge, Montreal to Toronto, and Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. This allows us to claim that the ethoses characterize particular cities rather than the countries.

Our argument can also be challenged by the claim that cities have more than one defining ethos, and that ethoses vary by social stratum and class, by location, and by religion within a given city. Well, we do our best to show that ethoses are shared by ethnic groups, social classes, and genders, and we do this by interviewing members of different groups as well as referring to literature and scholarly works about them.

One last methodological comment: as much as we were influenced by Benjamin's method, it does not explain why we were moved to write and research in the way we did rather than in a more standard academic voice. Although we admire and respect standard academic work, we also think that much academic writing has become too specialized and far removed from everyday concerns. We prefer to write in an accessible style that engages people's emotions while trying to speak the truth as we see it.

#### PROMOTING AN ETHOS

Given our preference for cities with a dominant ethos, it is worth saying something about the factors that increase the likelihood that a city will develop one. Policy makers and concerned citizens who agree with our outlook can therefore make informed decisions about how to create, revive, or nourish the "spirit" of a city. One caveat, however. We would like to emphasize that the public commitment to create or nourish an ethos should be invoked only once the city has overcome material scarcity. One of the features that distinguish cities from rural areas is that cities are generally wealthier. But some cities in poor countries are still very poor, meaning that many inhabitants struggle to get the necessities of daily life, such as enough food or water, or decent toilet facilities. In such conditions, it is difficult for a city to develop an ethos that unites people. Nor should it: it seems immoral to strive to develop an ethos in very poor cities if it comes at the expense of the most pressing task of securing the necessities of life. By this we do not claim that people of poor cities do not or did not care in the past about their ethos; we claim only that it would be inappropriate to demand that a city work on its ethos if the demand conflicts with the more pressing task of dealing with extreme poverty.<sup>30</sup> Let us then turn to the factors that help to promote an ethos.

First, the city does not have a huge gap between rich and poor or between ethnic and racial groups. If different groups lead separate lives and strongly dis-



like one another, they will find it difficult to partake of a shared common (dominant) ethos. In some American cities the rich/poor and white/black divide is so pervasive that city residents share hardly anything in common. Jerusalem seems to be an exception because the sharply polarized groups are generally committed to the ideal of the city as a symbol of religious identity. Belfast serves as an example of a city that was divided and, now that it is united, is searching for its ethos. But here there is also a normative aspect. In some cities the gap between the poor and the rich and/or different ethnic groups has yet to be bridged (e.g., in Paris, where many poor immigrants reside in the city's outlying areas). Our claim is that more affluent inhabitants should do all they can to embrace the newcomers. We also claim, more controversially, that immigrants who move to a city might want to consider the ethos there and whether it suits them. True, some immigrants move to a certain city because they are desperate and do not have any choice. But once they find themselves in that city, they can still strive to adapt to its ethos, as well as contribute to shaping that ethos in new ways.

Second, the city has a long-term rivalry with another city, often in the same country. Cities like Montreal, Beijing, or Jerusalem derive much of their identity by comparing themselves with Anglophone, "superficial," or "hedonist" cities like Toronto, Shanghai, or Tel Aviv. From a moral point of view, such rivalries are less problematic than rivalries between nations because cities do not have their own armies (Singapore is an exception) and won't go to war if competitive feelings get out of hand. Moreover, the rivalries are often the subject of humor and can inspire cultural creations of lasting value (e.g., the Montreal Canadiens would not have become the greatest team in hockey history without being able to repeatedly beat up the sad-sack Toronto Maple Leafs).<sup>31</sup>

Third, the city's identity/ethos is threatened by outside forces, and hence residents have a strong motivation to struggle to keep their identity. The people of Hong Kong fight to maintain their capitalist way of life as opposed to "communist" China, the people of Montreal fight to preserve the French language in a "sea of English," the people of Singapore fight to maintain their nation among larger and potentially hostile neighboring countries, and so on. So long as basic rights are not violated as part of the struggle, there is no reason to criticize such efforts.

Fourth, the city has substantial authority to enact laws (in the case of Singapore), ordinances, bylaws, and regulations that protect and nourish its particular identity or ethos. As a city-state, Singapore is the extreme example (but the government of Singapore is still not free to legislate as it sees fit: it is constrained by its small size and lack of natural resources and must often conform to the "dictates" of globalization). Chinese cities have the power to determine who becomes a full member of the city by means of the *hukou* (household registration

system), which influences the character of the city and can have life-or-death implications for people (as in Tianjin during the famine that followed the Great Leap Forward). At the other extreme, American cities often lack authority to deal with common problems because cities have power only if state governments authorize them to act, hence contributing to suburbanization and the breaking up of the city into distinct neighborhoods based on class or race.<sup>32</sup> More typical, perhaps, are “intermediate” cases, in which the rulers of cities like Paris and Beijing must deal with several overlapping layers of legal authority yet still manage (on occasion) to implement regulations designed to promote the ethos of the city.

Fifth, the cities have or had great city planners with the moral, political, and legal authority to enact transformative plans that help to realize a common public ethos. Extreme cases include cities planned from scratch, such as Canberra, Chandigarh, or (more recently) Masdar, the experimental project in the United Arab Emirates planned by Foster and Partners that aims to construct a “green” city where even the smallest details are conceived for the purpose of ecological sustainability.<sup>33</sup> Great city planners discussed in our book include Baron Haussmann in Paris, Robert Moses in New York, Goh Keng Swee in Singapore, and Jean Drapeau in Montreal. This is not to imply that plans are always successful: typically they must be rooted in some latent ethos that the residents care about. The plan to build Brasilia into a classless urban society that owes nothing to the past led to an even more ruthless segregation between rich and poor than in any of the older Brazilian cities.<sup>34</sup> And Jean Drapeau’s plans to make Montreal into a global power failed because most Montrealers cared more about language rights.

Sixth, an external agency, such as an advertising campaign or a movie, brands a city as having particular characteristics. Like urban planning, such efforts typically succeed only if the branding corresponds to something that already exists in people’s minds and in the urban landscape.<sup>35</sup> Paris has become known as the “city of romance” in large part because of images in Hollywood films and the work of photographers like Henri Cartier-Bresson, but such images stick only because the city itself is so beautiful and lends itself to romantic imagery (though many Parisians reject the imagery, as we will discuss).

None of these six factors, taken alone, is necessary or sufficient to create or nourish an ethos. However, each factor does increase the likelihood of success, and the more such factors are present, the greater the likelihood of success. For a city that seeks to develop or nourish an ethos, it might be useful to keep these factors in mind; put negatively, if they are not present or likely to become significant factors in the foreseeable future, then concerned citizens and city leaders should turn to other matters of moral and political importance, such as securing the basic necessities of life.

## OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

Let us, at long last, turn to the structure of our book. We discuss nine cities and we try to show how each city has developed and nourishes a common public ethos. Along the way, we take the opportunity to theorize on the basis of stories and sentiments generated by personal experience with those cities (we use italics for passages that describe our personal experience). We begin with the cities that have done most to shape our identities—Jerusalem (in the case of Avner) and Montreal (in the case of Daniel)—and then move on to the cities that have played important subsequent roles in shaping our identities: Singapore, Hong Kong, and Beijing (in the case of Daniel), and Oxford and Berlin (in the case of Avner). Those chapters are written by the author who has been most affected by the ethos of those cities. The final section discusses two cities—Paris and New York—that are not so crucial to our own personal identities but we think have important things to teach us about maintaining an ethos. Those two chapters are written by Daniel and draw on extensive notes (in the case of Paris) and an earlier essay (in the case of New York) by Avner.

The first chapter, on Jerusalem, discusses religious conviction. No doubt the ethos of this city is religion. Religion can be spiritual and gentle, as reflected in the lifestyle of many Jerusalemites. But the city has often been torn among national groups, ethnic groups, religions, and different schools within each religion. Moreover, Jerusalem is held to be the center of monotheism, but religion has often deteriorated into a kind of paganism, with stones and buildings being sanctified and human beings sacrificed and killed in the name of God. Avner ends on an optimistic note, suggesting a way of returning to faith.

The second chapter, on Montreal, discusses the value of language both in an economic sense and in the psychological sense of feeling at home in the world. Such issues often lead to social conflict in multilingual settings like Montreal. Daniel discusses the turbulent history of conflict over language in Montreal as well as the relatively peaceful and mutually beneficial resolution of linguistic conflict in that city—today, both Francophones and Anglophones take pride in the value of bilingualism—which might serve as a model for other multilingual cities that prioritize the value of language.

The third chapter discusses Singapore. As the only large city that is a separate state, Singapore has had to engage in nation building since it was expelled from the Malayan federation in 1965. The government has promoted three values meant to constitute national identity—the values of material well-being, multi-racialism, and meritocracy—in ways that have actually served to undermine national bonding, instead leading to an extreme form of individualism. The chapter ends with an account of Daniel's recent visit to Singapore during which he

unexpectedly discovered that there has been substantial progress in nation building over the past fifteen years or so.

The fourth chapter turns to Hong Kong, a “special administrative region” within China. Since its early days as a colonial outpost, Hong Kong has survived, and sometimes prospered, by means of its free-market ideology. In some ways, the ideology of free-market individualism did not match reality: the success of Hong Kong is partly explained by the fact that the government implemented a kind of welfare state with “Confucian characteristics” as well as by the presence of a widely shared Confucian ethic that prioritizes care for family members and other communities over individual self-satisfaction. The capitalist ideology is still a source of pride that marks off Hong Kong from cities in mainland China, but Hong Kong-style capitalism is not founded on self-interest or the pursuit of hedonism.

The fifth chapter focuses on Beijing. In contrast to Shanghai and Hong Kong, Beijing has long prided itself as being a political city. But the political history of the city has not always gone according to plan: most tragic, the communist experiment with revolution, centered in Beijing, fundamentally misapplied one of the key lessons of Karl Marx’s theory of history. In the second half of the chapter, Daniel discusses the present-day government’s effort to depoliticize the Chinese population by means of very political symbols in Beijing, ending with some speculation about how Confucian political traditions will shape the future of Beijing and, more broadly, China.

The sixth chapter discusses the case of Oxford and the ethos of learning. Oxford is well known for its university, one of the oldest in the world and a center of excellence. Avner argues that the idea of Oxford is learning rather than research, and scholarship rather than publishing. In addition, he takes a critical look at the distribution (or lack thereof) of access to learning in this city.

The seventh chapter focuses on Berlin and the idea of (in)tolerance. Berlin has been engaged in the project of learning from history, and we wonder how practical this project can be and what people really learn from history. The city nowadays seems to be a mecca for those who care about tolerance, but its inhabitants remain skeptical, fearing that at any minute the situation could change dramatically to one of intolerance. Avner asks if a new political culture is enough, or whether there is a need for some institutional mechanisms to prevent Berlin from deteriorating into a new era of racism and violence.

The eighth chapter turns to Paris and romance. The idea of Paris as a romantic city owes much to foreign perceptions that are rejected by Parisians themselves. However, a more sophisticated ethos of romance—what we call a “non-pasteurized” romance that contrasts with bourgeois modes of life—is a more accurate description of the Parisian ethos as understood by “locals.” The chapter

concludes with some reflections on the tension between the pursuit of romance and the pursuit of morality.

The final chapter discusses New York—the “capital of the world”—and its ethos of ambition. New York became the capital of finance and culture as a result of its history of attracting different kinds of ambitious immigrants, who innovate and create by constant questioning of established ways of life. The dark side of ambition, however, is an extreme form of individualism that is almost unique among great cities. Paradoxically, however, there is a strong sense of “civicism” in New York that allows the city to survive the repeated challenges to decent community life.

### THICK AND THIN

This book is both too thick and too thin. It’s too thick in the literal sense. As authors, we hope that the readers will read the whole thing, and we tried to write in an accessible and enjoyable style that might make the task less arduous. But we realize that some choices may need to be made. In fact, the book need not be read in any particular order. We hope that readers will read about their own cities and perhaps discover new insights, but we hope even more that readers will learn new things about different cities. The process of learning about different cities can also improve self-understanding: we understand ourselves better by understanding who we are not.

The book is too thin in the sense of that our discussion of cities is not as comprehensive as it might be. Our discussion is largely determined—and limited by—our personal experience. In the eyes of hard-core social scientists, our method may seem too impressionistic. We can and should support our claims about the ethoses of cities with more objective tests and studies. Moreover, some academics may object that the book does not make full use of the findings of disciplines such as sociology, geography, architecture, psychology, and urban studies. Even though we try to be interdisciplinary, we may still be limited by our expertise in political theory. Perhaps the theories of Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, and Pierre Bourdieu—and the theories of influential contemporary scholars of the city, such as Saskia Sassen, Manuel Castells, Witold Rybczynski, Edward Glaeser, Mario Polese, David Harvey, Richard Florida, Charles Landry, and Jeb Brugmann—can help us to think further about the ethoses of cities, or perhaps cast doubt on the whole idea.

In our defense, we think that our method yields plausible results. We mean to open dialogues about the cities we discuss rather than to close them off. We welcome the opportunity to test our claims, and it could be that social science will disprove some of them. Even as a series of personal engagements with the

cities we discuss, our book is most definitely not meant to be the final answer. Perhaps other writers can tell different and more compelling stories about even more dominant ethoses in the cities we discuss: Hong Kong and cultural hybridity? Jerusalem and learning? Paris and food? Italo Calvino has written an enjoyable book that seemingly recounts stories of different cities as told by Marco Polo to the Chinese emperor Kublai Khan, but it turns out that Marco Polo is just providing interpretations of different ethoses of the same city (Venice).<sup>36</sup> The work is fiction (almost dreamlike), but we do not mean to deny the possibility that alternative stories about “our” cities could be told that would seem at least as compelling as those we tell.

What we’re more sure about is that insightful stories can be told about the common public ethoses of cities not covered in this book. We hope to hear accounts of the ethoses of cities in Africa (Johannesburg and racial reconciliation?), Latin America (Managua and revolution?), India (Bombay and film?),<sup>37</sup> Japan (Kyoto and tradition?), as well as different cities in the United States (sports in Green Bay, dissent in Berkeley, environmentalism in Portland?) and elsewhere. This book is just a start, and we hope other authors will be encouraged to tell stories mixing the personal and the political about the ethoses of their own cities.

City-zens of the world, unite!<sup>38</sup>

## THE CITY OF RELIGION

### HUMANS WITH HEARTS

February 2, 2010. I attend a basketball game that is part of the European League playoff between Hapoel Jerusalem and Galatasary Istanbul. The name Hapoel literally means “the worker.” It says quite a lot about the team. This club was once affiliated with the massive General Federation of Labor in Israel trade union, but is now a nonprofit organization whose supporters often wear red shirts and are associated with the left politically. I fell in love with the team as a teenager and developed into a die-hard fan. On my left today in the stands are a pair of modern Orthodox Jews,<sup>1</sup> who, like me, have bought season tickets. We are friends and have stood in the stands for years now, cheering and shouting and wishing the referee’s wife and mother all kinds of things. Today, on my right is a young Arab I’ve never seen before. It strikes me that our little group actually sums up the way Jerusalem is conceived by many: nearly 50 percent religious Jews, 25 percent secular Jews (me), and 25 percent Arabs. Our team does very well and the three of us shout and joke. Yet the young Arab is deadly serious and doesn’t move. I ask him why he isn’t cheering and shouting, and he just looks at me so seriously and sadly that I can’t help thinking: he must be a terrorist and he’ll blow himself up any second now. I feel terrible at being unable to rid myself of this stupid idea. But perhaps this is what Jerusalem is about, I think dejectedly: enmity, suspicion, and the ever-present Israeli-Arab conflict. Thankfully, the minutes tick by and he doesn’t explode. I become even more ashamed of having thought what I thought, so I strike up a conversation with the young Arab. Some minutes later, another religious man comes along and stands between me and my ultra-Orthodox friends. Deciding he needs more space, I move closer to the Arab guy to give him room. One of my Orthodox friends comes over to tease me, saying, “Hey, Lefty, you think I haven’t noticed recently that you are moving away from us?!”

Jerusalem is a holy city for hundreds of millions of people. It is also a city where 780,000 people live and work. As host to the best university in Israel, it has a large student population. Jerusalem has a small number of theaters, a symphony

orchestra, and a respectable bohemian community. It is a city where Arabs and Israelis coexist, as do Muslims and Christians with Jews, secular Jews with Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jews, Oriental Jews with European Jews.<sup>2</sup> The city is thousands of years old. It was probably first settled in the nineteenth century BCE. It has seen countless wars and conquests (according to the records, Jerusalem was the site of a well-known battle as far back as 1250 BCE). But above all, it is not a city you can be dispassionate about: either you love it or you hate it. “That’s obvious,” says my friend and university colleague. “The religious love it and the secular hate it.” I disagree. I, for one, consider myself secular but I adore the city and, at least for now, cannot see myself living and working anywhere else. Admittedly, though, I am a believer and feel a lot of sympathy with faith.<sup>3</sup>

So what is the secret of Jerusalem? Why do people love it? Why are so many people ready to die for it or, worse, kill for it? It is no good trying to work out how many have died in wars in and “because of” Jerusalem. The task is impossible because there are no historical data, but I do know that enough lives have been lost for me to say with the utmost conviction, “Enough is enough!” And yet, can anyone guarantee that no one will kill or be killed over Jerusalem in the near future? The Jerusalem poet Yehuda Amichai wrote, “Suicide attempts of Jerusalem . . . / She’ll never succeed, but she’ll try, try again and again.”<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, hatred resides within the city of God. This absurdity is wasted on the many who kill and fight over this city. Jerusalem’s image as a city of God is so strong and has become so distorted that many—too many—people believe that the very fact of God’s “existence” in Jerusalem justifies violence, intolerance, and hatred. So this is the subject of the chapter on Jerusalem: How Jerusalem could have been a symbol of beauty, kindness, benevolence, goodness, and grace. About how it often is. How it always should be. How it often is not. And this chapter will try to discover why not.

Dan Pagis is a Holocaust survivor who migrated to Israel in 1946, when he was a sixteen-year-old boy, and later became a lecturer at my university, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. A renowned poet, Pagis wrote a wonderful poem about Jerusalem, titled “The Eternal City.” Here is my own translation.

Wounded in psalms of glory,  
 engraved in daggers  
 on her poor shoulders, adorned with a corona  
 of holy fire, all legions  
 lunged at her to look for their savior  
 within her arms, and made her the world’s heart  
 to all who seek the miracle, and bound her  
 and crucified her to glorify her name—



and never stopped and never wondered why  
she is hiding a wall within a wall

Eternal city, like a brownish fist  
tightly closed in a stone, still awaiting  
hard-headed, fenced and delimited  
to live peacefully not twiddling her thumbs  
but within her all those who feed on wonder  
wizards of magic, praying for the sign  
which will descend on her from Heaven  
and turn her face upside down, and bury  
her soul in a bundle of soil, and sanctify her  
forever with their feet, like a cemetery.

*The Jerusalem cemetery is the first thing one sees at the western entrance to the city. I drive Daniel to Jerusalem from the airport. As we reach the city, to our right is a mountain covered with graves. I tell Daniel that one of Jerusalem's best-known writers, Meir Shalev, jokes that the municipal cemetery was put at the entrance to Jerusalem because the strongest trade union in Jerusalem is that of the dead. Many Jerusalemites say cynically that Jerusalem is the only city in the world where the right to vote is granted to the dead. Daniel finds that a good joke, but maybe it isn't a joke.*

Jerusalem has no natural resources and sits on no natural trade routes. Therefore in ancient times its wealth was made up entirely of donations brought by the devoted. Today the city is the poorest of Israel's major cities, and one of the poorest of all its cities. A third of Jerusalem's population lives below the poverty line (the situation for Jerusalem's Arabs is worse; nearly two-thirds live below poverty line). Many Jerusalemites do not work, but pray and study. There is not much of an industrial zone, and efforts by Jerusalem's mayors to attract high-tech companies in the 1980s and 1990s were only partially successful. You will find the big money in Tel Aviv, city of affluence and antithesis of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is thousands of years old; Tel Aviv celebrated its one hundredth anniversary only recently. Jerusalem people tend not to go out much, especially in winter, when it can get really cold (snowing twice a year), whereas Tel Aviv is a 24/7 city and certainly, in terms of culture and entertainment, the richest in Israel—some would say the Middle East. Jerusalem has a symphony orchestra; Tel Aviv has a philharmonic. Last October, as dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Hebrew University congratulating our students on the first day of the year, I said, half joking, "Welcome to Jerusalem. It's a great city; we have two pubs!"

All this affects the population and its character. People who are into urban fun don't find Jerusalem very appealing. People who are into spirituality do. One of our interviewees said, "In Tel Aviv they know how to live; in Jerusalem we know why we live." Those looking for high salaries tend to find work in Tel Aviv, not in Jerusalem. Above all, Tel Avivians are mostly secular. And Jerusalemites, even when they are not religious, usually acknowledge and accept the city's religious flavor and atmosphere. When I ask a friend of mine who loves living in Jerusalem what he finds so appealing, he answers, "A city that dates back to the nineteenth century BCE gives one a feeling of responsibility; we are responsible for its continuity. It lacks the unbearable lightness of being typical of Tel Aviv." I guess one can generalize that people in Jerusalem are humble in an arrogant way.

But living in Jerusalem is authentic; there are no pretensions. You know what Jerusalem is about and you are willing to accept it. In Tel Aviv, though, it is always about "appearance," "make-believe." When I asked one person how he would define the difference between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, he replied: "The clothes people wear in Tel Aviv are worn to make a statement. 'Hey,' they are saying, 'Look at my clothes, look at me, I'm cool, or I'm doing well.' In Jerusalem, people wear clothes because it's cold outside and they want to warm up." One day, as Benny Tzipper, a journalist for *Haaretz*, Israel's most liberal newspaper, strolled around Tel Aviv, he was struck by the fact that a massive military complex surrounded by barbed wire stands opposite the opera house, and that a jail is across the street from the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. Writing on the subject of hypocrisy and people's indifference to the suffering of others, he ended his essay: "From that perspective, it is so much easier in Jerusalem. There, the tension between Jews and Arabs, religious people and secular people, in fact, the tension between people in general, and the brutality and violence in our lives, is an open part of the city's narrative. In Tel Aviv . . . people stroll past the military complex convincing themselves it is a fairground. . . . Tel Aviv has taught itself to turn a blind eye to the unpleasant."

Indeed, since poverty prevails in Jerusalem, there are more local charities and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) devoted to helping vulnerable people than in any other city in Israel. But the explanation for this massive infrastructure of poverty relief is not only that the city is poor; it is also that Jerusalem contains a colorful patchwork of ethnic and religious groups, each with its own organizations to care for its members. Thus, pluralism is part of the city's life and even its folklore. In fact, Mark Twain, on his visit to the city in 1867, described this plurality: "The population of Jerusalem is composed of Moslems, Jews, Greeks, Latins, Armenians, Syrians, Copts, Abyssinians, Greek Catholics, and a handful of Protestants. . . . The nice shades of nationality comprised in the above

list, and the languages spoken by them, are altogether too numerous to mention. It seems to me that all the races and colors and tongues of the earth must be represented among the fourteen thousand souls that dwell in Jerusalem.”<sup>5</sup>

Twain’s additional comment—”Rags, wretchedness, poverty and dirt [were the] signs and symbols that indicate the presence of Moslem”—is arguably not the best example of tolerance. Many believe that even today Jerusalemites are basically tolerant of many religions around them, including churches, mosques, synagogues, and self-nominated prophets. Or are they? Or maybe the story is that they should be yet they aren’t?

*In the early 1990s, I was a young lecturer at the Hebrew University, specializing in environmental politics and environmental ethics. One day I received a letter from an American professor of environmental policy who had read my works. O.P.—that was his nickname—wrote that he was a Hindu believer and was eager to visit Jerusalem, the holy city, and would I host him? Though I had never met him, I thought this would be a fascinating experience, which indeed it was. When he arrived, he could not wait to take the bus to the Old City, where we went from one holy place to another. In each place he prayed. I asked him to which God he prayed, and whether it was to the same God in all places. “Of course,” he said, with a shining smile, “it is the God that is within us.” “But,” I insisted, “these places you have visited are holy to religions that denounce other people’s Gods and prophets and claim that God is external to human beings.” “Oh,” he sighed as we climbed the Mount of Olives toward the Church of the Ascension, where, according to Christian tradition, Jesus ascended to Heaven. “They don’t really mean it.” I looked at him wonderingly, and he continued, “God is everywhere; outside you, inside you, and it has many forms.” I still remember how he emphasized the word many, stretching it out as long as he could. When we reached the tiny church, he continued, “Humans who have a heart have God within them.”*

#### A CITY WITH AN IMAGE OF GOD

Jerusalem could easily be described as the center of monotheism. For Muslims, it is called “the sacred” (in Arabic, *Al-Quds*). According to Muslim tradition, Muhammad visited Jerusalem during a famous and fascinating night journey that included ascension into the heavens to be shown the signs of God.<sup>6</sup> When Omar seized the city from the Christians in 638, he built a modest mosque on Mount Temple. The current amazingly beautiful mosque, called Dome of the Rock, is the oldest existing mosque in the Muslim world, dating from 691. The initiator was Caliph Abd al-Malik. Several historians claim that he built the mosque not so much out of religious belief as for political and economic reasons. A compet-

ing caliph who ruled in Mecca challenged the legitimacy of Abd al-Malik. Being the birthplace of Muhammad, Mecca attracted many pilgrimages and therefore benefited financially. So in order to attract these people to Jerusalem Abd al-Malik built this huge and beautiful mosque, claiming that the rock at the center of the dome is the spot from which Muhammad ascended through the heavens to God. Other historians claim that the reason the mosque was built was to compete against the beautiful buildings serving at that time the Christians. Indeed, they point out, the measurements of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher were copied. The diameter of the mosque is 20.20 meters and its height 20.48 meters, while the diameter of the dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is 20.90 meters and its height 21.05 meters.<sup>7</sup>

*In the early 1990s, our university hosted a professor from Canada and I was asked to book a hotel room for him. Never having met him, I booked him a room at one of the city's five-star hotels, which is about the same as any other five-star hotel on the planet. I could see that he was deeply disappointed on his arrival at the hotel. "Don't you like the hotel?" I asked, and he replied, very politely: "Well, you know, it's Jerusalem. I wasn't expecting to stay in yet another five-star hotel." I knew immediately what he had in mind and drove him to the YMCA. "This is actually a hotel," I said, "though quite a modest one." As he looked at the building, his face shone.*

The Jerusalem YMCA building on King David Street is considered the fanciest YMCA in the world.<sup>8</sup> It was built in 1926, thanks to a donation of one million dollars. Nowadays it faces the King David Hotel, perhaps the most luxurious hotel in Israel, but when it was built it faced the walls of the Old City. The Young Men's Christian Association hired Arthur Louis Harmon, the same architect who five years later designed the Empire State Building in New York, to design its building in Jerusalem. The goal was to create a center for cultural and social interaction among Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The Jewish community was initially quite suspicious, but gradually the building did emerge as a center for such activities. If there is one building in Jerusalem that seeks to capture the idea of religion, it is this. The building has three wings, representing the Christian Trinitarian formula of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But the three wings also represent the unity of mind, spirit, and body,<sup>9</sup> and, naturally, the three monotheistic religions. At the top of the northern wing is carved the Jewish declaration of faith, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one." At the top of the Southern wing is carved the Muslim declaration of faith in the Oneness of God, "There is no God but Allah" (God). In the garden, there are twelve cypress trees representing the twelve tribes (Judaism), the twelve apostles (Christianity), and the twelve successors to Muhammad (Islam). The symbolic

number twelve is repeated again in the twelve windows of the concert hall, where I often enjoy recitals thanks to the superb acoustics. The external corridor has forty pillars, representing the forty years of the Israelites' wandering in the desert on their way from Egypt to the land of Israel, and the forty days that Satan tried to tempt Jesus. A statue depicting the head of a woman carrying a jar of water depicts the Samaritan woman Jesus talked with at the well. Below the entrance door stands the statue of an altar built of unshaped and unrefined stones. This represents the altar that Jacob built at Bet El, north of Jerusalem, and indeed the architect brought the stones to build this one from Bet El. There are other highly symbolic works dotting the Jerusalem YMCA, making it seem more like a homily than a work of architecture.<sup>10</sup> When you visit this building, you cannot ignore the message of this city: it is God's city; the city's story is about faith; more accurately, it is about the three monotheistic religions sharing a faith in the oneness of God.

There is a lot to be learned regarding the role of religion in the conception of Jerusalem from studying its maps. The geographical historian Rehav Rubin believes that until modern times, maps of Jerusalem indeed resembled an idea and embodied an attitude rather than a description of a real-life city. Many maps of Jerusalem were, in fact, drawn by people who had never seen the city with their own eyes.<sup>11</sup> And although the usual purpose of maps is to depict the real world in graphic form, this was not really what those who drew maps of Jerusalem wanted to do. The idea of Jerusalem was more important to them than the real city. As I reflect on this, I cannot help but feel that for many, Jerusalem is a dream, an idea, perhaps an idealization. Hence, most of the Jerusalem maps were more attuned to guiding people's thinking about their experience of faith and belief in the city than to help them move around it. Thus, some maps of Jerusalem show it as the center of three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa. On the other hand, maps drawn during the period of the Crusades (1099–1187) tended to be detailed but often drew the city as a circle, as if to show its roundness, wholeness, and completeness. In maps from the fourteenth century, some details are exaggerated: for example, the Kidron valley—which is nearly always dry—is shown as a broad river; the city has walls even though they were destroyed in 1219.<sup>12</sup>

Mark Twain, whose 1867 visit to the city was mentioned earlier, described the excitement and joy of his fellow pilgrims as they approached Jerusalem (from the north) and saw the city from afar:

At last, away in the middle of the day, ancient bits of wall and crumbling arches began to line the way—we toiled up one more hill, and every pilgrim and every sinner swung his hat on high! Jerusalem! Perched on its

eternal hills, white and domed and solid, massed together and hooped with high gray walls, the venerable city gleamed in the sun. So small! Why, it was no larger than an American village of four thousand inhabitants. . . . We dismounted and looked, without speaking a dozen sentences, across the wide intervening valley for an hour or more. . . . I think there was no individual in the party whose brain was not teeming with thoughts and images and memories invoked by the grand history of the venerable city that lay before us. . . . There was no call for tears. Tears would have been out of place. The thoughts Jerusalem suggests are full of poetry, sublimity, and more than all, dignity. Such thoughts do not find their appropriate expression in the emotions of the nursery. . . . Just after noon we entered these narrow, crooked streets, by the ancient and the famed Damascus Gate, and now for several hours I have been trying to comprehend that I am actually in the illustrious old city where Solomon dwelt, where Abraham held converse with the Deity, and where walls still stand that witnessed the spectacle of the Crucifixion.<sup>13</sup>

But once inside the city, Twain was not so impressed with its small scale, noting its very narrow and inconvenient streets and describing it from a somewhat disillusioned perspective. The city is not sacred but rather poor and filthy: “Lepers, cripples, the blind, and the idiotic, assail you on every hand, and they know but one word of but one language apparently—the eternal ‘bucksheesh.’”<sup>14</sup> He was cynical: “To see the numbers of maimed, malformed and diseased humanity that throng the holy places and obstruct the gates, one might suppose that the ancient days had come again, and that the angel of the Lord was expected to descend at any moment to stir the waters of Bethesda. Jerusalem is mournful, and dreary, and lifeless. I would not desire to live here.”

So Twain was not very keen on living in Jerusalem, but I’m sure most Jerusalemites would not take it personally. Others, however, have moved to this holy city and not regretted it.

*Daniel and I meet Orly, a PhD student of mine who is an expert on Jerusalem. She knows a lot of people in the city and takes us to meet Brother Oscar, a Franciscan monk who decided to move to Jerusalem upon graduating from university in Italy seven years ago. We enter the Old City through the Jaffa Gate and turn left. We are now in the Christian Quarter, where we meet Brother Oscar at the Franciscan Saint Savior’s monastery. Two hundred years ago, a group of friars established a monastery on Mount Zion where the Last Supper is believed to have taken place. In the early twentieth century, the monastery was moved to where it stands today. Brother Oscar has only been here for seven years, yet he says “we” when he explains*

*the history of the site. "We bought this place from the Georgian monks." Brother Oscar is the kind of person you immediately fall in love with. He is gentle, polite, and charming, and has a good sense of humor, sometimes directed at himself. In describing meal times at the monastery, he says, "You know, you are supposed to eat in silence. But for me, as an Italian, it goes against my nature. We can't keep quiet when we eat." Brother Oscar explains that Christians in Jerusalem are a minority in two senses: like the Arabs, they are a minority compared to the Jews, and they are also a minority within the gentile community, which is mostly Muslim. So does he feel at home here? Mario Oscar was not religious when he took his political science degree in Naples. But when he became religious, he realized without a doubt that he would come to Jerusalem, and now he feels at home. "In this city, even if you are an atheist, you are religious," he says, flashing that warm smile again.*

*Brother Oscar shepherds us to the monastery chapel. On the way, we ask why he felt so certain that he would come here. He catches us off guard: "Everyone was born in Jerusalem," he says gravely, and it strikes me that although I was born in Rehovot, a small town not far from Tel Aviv, and lived there until the age of fifteen, when my family moved to Jerusalem, I nonetheless felt that somehow I had been born in Jerusalem. I tell him this, expecting him to laugh, but Brother Oscar takes me seriously. He takes what I said literally, though I was speaking metaphorically.*

Unlike Twain's mixed portrayal of delight and shock, the British have tended to see Jerusalem through a romantic haze, idealizing the city and its religious halo. For many years, the dream of rebuilding Jerusalem in England, on England's "green and pleasant land," was part of English culture and, many would claim, its religious identity. In fact, this ideal influenced the way the Victorians responded to real-life Jerusalem, then a dry and dirty city in the Middle East. The historian Eitan Bar Yosef has suggested that metaphorical appropriations of the "Holy Land" and "Jerusalem" have played a much more dominant role in the English cultural imagination than the city itself has.<sup>15</sup>

*Daniel is in Jerusalem and, naturally, we make our way to a basketball game. The Jerusalem team is behind and there are 1.7 seconds left on the clock. The player throws from eight meters without even a glance and the ball dives miraculously into the basket. Jerusalem wins. And the man next us yells, "You see! There is a God!"*

#### FAITH AND RELIGION

After living in Jerusalem for more than a year or so, many secular people come to like the idea of a life lived with faith. However, they reject the idea of institutionalized faith: that is, Religion. So I discussed this point with many religious

and secular people from the three monotheistic religions—Jews, Muslims, and Christians. My conclusion was that if religion was a voluntary get-together of people with a shared faith, it could be great for many; but it would have to be spontaneous, almost anarchistic, and somewhat eclectic, allowing individuals to pick and choose the elements they want to frame their faith. Of course, the core idea would have to be clear—say, a belief in the oneness of God. For this to happen, religion would have to be pluralistic, open, tolerant and accepting, detached from politics as a form of order and hierarchy, and spiritual rather than materialistic, so that religious leaders could avoid corruption. If you ask me, Jerusalem has this ethos to offer because it is home to so many faiths and religions, because it is not an affluent city, because it has seen too much bloodshed and war, and because its architecture and planning provide the right atmosphere. Having said that, I can see much too much of the opposite in my meetings and conversations: I see religion that deteriorates into hatred and spirituality that deteriorates into witchcraft and paganism.

*It is New Year's Eve or, as it is called among Christians in Jerusalem, Sylvester's Day. Pope Sylvester died on December 31, 335. Many Jews regard Sylvester as an evil enemy and persecutor of the Jews, but that will not trouble the hundreds of youngsters who will be out celebrating New Year's Eve in the city's pubs and restaurants. At the moment it is a gray day as I drive with a friend to Ein Kerem (Vineyard's Spring, in Hebrew), a picturesque "village" on the edge of the city. There we come across a group of Nigerian pilgrims. Wearing ornate, colorful clothing, they rush excitedly into one of Ein Kerem's many churches. It is still quite early in the morning and the village itself is only just stirring. The door of one of the cafés is open, and I suggest we go in so I can warm myself with an espresso and chat with the young man who works there. A young Jerusalemite, he has rented a room in the village. Why does he like Ein Kerem? The atmosphere, he says, a lot of tourists, some artists, a few hippy types, religious people, restaurants. I mention to my friend that Palestinians used to live here until they were forced to leave in 1948. Perhaps the pleasant, harmonious atmosphere that currently prevails rises from the many tears buried in this soil, he says. Perhaps that is the story of Jerusalem, I reply. For those Nigerian pilgrims, this is beside the point. Mostly, what interests them is that, according to Christian tradition, Ein Kerem was the home of Zacharia and his wife, Elizabeth, and, even more important, the birthplace of their son, John the Baptist. We step out of the café into the chilly morning air. The sun breaks through the clouds, shedding light on the main church here. Such are moments when rare beauty combines with a sense of sweet sadness, and gives rise to something that many would call kitsch. But I feel a kind of spiritual elevation. I see the many Christians around me and I feel that we share the same God, "the God that is within us," as O.P. taught*



*me. I recalled that the previous week I had walked just outside Jerusalem with Daniel, who had already been here two months. The sun had suddenly shone through the thick clouds, throwing a golden rosy light across the hills surrounding Jerusalem, and Daniel had cried, "Look, here is God again!" Perhaps this is what happens to people who stay too long in Jerusalem.*

I follow one group of tourists and listen to their guide's explanations. She says that *spirituality* and *pluralism* are the two terms that most characterize Ein Kerem. For Catholics, visiting the holy sites implies reinforcement of the text. For Orthodox Christians, visiting the holy sites guarantees them a reward in the afterlife (and they must carefully scrutinize the icons in the churches for this to happen); for Protestants, the site itself is holy—it is less important whether the story in the New Testament is true; they care more about the direct connection, while visiting holy places, between the visitor and God.

*Daniel spent two months in Jerusalem conducting this research with me. He met a migrant worker who was really delighted with Jerusalem. A Christian from a town near Bangalore, he attends church each Saturday (which is his day off because he works for Jews). The church he visits in the Old City hosts a congregation of three hundred Indians for Mass. Jerusalem, he says, offers this group of migrant workers an opportunity for spiritual experiences that other cities might not be able to provide.*

In 1891, a group of rather affluent Bukharan Jews decided to build a new neighborhood outside the walls of Jerusalem. It would serve as a pleasant vacation resort during their visits to Jerusalem. In 1905, when the neighborhood began to grow, two men, Mr. Yeudayof and Mr. Hefetz, decided to add a magnificent palatial building to welcome the Messiah on his arrival. The architect was Italian and the design European, with two marble staircases leading up to the entrance. On the outside wall they had engraved *Im Eshkachech Yerushalayim* ("If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I remember thee not"), a quotation from Psalm 137:5, which has been said many times in the context of waiting for the Messiah and longing to see him enter the city. When the Messiah failed to come, the house was put to good use hosting guests and as a venue for celebrations, showing a kind of naïve spirituality combined with down-to-earth practicality. For example, in May 1918 the city's Jewish community held its welcome party there for General Allenby, the commander of the British forces who had defeated the Ottomans and occupied Jerusalem.<sup>16</sup>

*Jerusalemites are in love, and love is blind. They usually think Jerusalem is the most beautiful city on earth. On Passover 2008, although it is early morning it is*

already 40 degrees Celsius and terribly dry and hot. I walk down Emile Botta Road, past a sign reading, "To the Kosher Wine Fair." Anybody who knows something about wine knows that kosher wine used to be synonymous with wine too horrible for words, described by some as grape vandalism. That was because making kosher wine used to involve boiling it. Nowadays, the only thing that being kosher implies is that the wine was produced by Jews. Still, the idea that wine has to be kosher may sound quite odd to most folks outside Jerusalem, but this is what you get in most local restaurants when you order wine (Daniel, who has had many Israeli bottles of wine with me, would agree that it's actually not bad). Ahead of me now are the Old City walls, and I hurry toward the Old City through the Jaffa Gate, past the Via Dolorosa, to the Jewish Quarter and the Wailing Wall. On the way I see the Christian Information Center, the Swedish Christian Center, and Christ Church Guest House. Religions in Jerusalem do not try to outdo one another by building higher than the next. Rather they build solid buildings that say, "We're here to stay." Men with their talliths, Jewish prayer shawls, pass me. They are all rushing to the Wailing Wall because today is the day Birkat Kohanim (the Priestly Blessing) is said.<sup>17</sup> This is a threefold blessing, asking God to protect the individual: "May God bless you and guard you; may God cause His countenance to shine upon you and be gracious to you; may God lift up His countenance to you and grant you peace." For many, Birkat Kohanim is a form of incantation, made up of verses of three, five, and seven words; the blessing, it is said, can overcome bad omens and dreams.

I walk by the *Cardo*, where recent archeological excavations have exposed First Temple period walls from the eighth century BCE. I stop at a shop with an exhibition of photographs shot during the fall of the Jewish Quarter in Israel's Independence War in 1948. I imagine very few people know that in the 1948 war, Jews lost land to Arabs, the Jordanian army. That was how my mother, her sister, and their parents lost their home.

I suddenly hear the Priestly Blessing over the loudspeakers and hurry along, descending the many stairs to the wide bright plaza of the Kotel, the Wailing Wall. There I can see thousands of people gathered.<sup>18</sup> I see the Temple Mount and, on it, the two famous Muslim mosques. As I said, here religions do not compete with one another by building taller towers; they simply build on one another's remains. The vast plaza in front of the Kotel is filled with thousands of people. When I was a child, it was not like this. It was full of houses, which were "shaved," to quote the verb used at the time, to create this huge public square.

When I was seventeen, our football team, Hapoel Jerusalem, made it to the cup final. What a rare event that was, and my friend and I decided to skip school and go to Tel Aviv to watch the game. But on our way, we went to the Kotel. We wrote a letter to God asking for Hapoel to win, and we stuck it between the massive stones. Of course, in those days God listened to simple people, and our team won. Nowadays

*you can send a fax to the Kotel's fax machine, and someone prints your fax and sticks it between the stones. Ah, I think, that is not the real thing. If you want God to listen, get yourself to the wall and touch its cool stones and pray. What's all this about faxing a note? Instant prayer?*

*I see people carrying Torah scrolls—they are very heavy—and the loudspeaker announcer begs the crowd, "Please let the scrolls of the Torah through." Then I see what looks like a fetish—people kissing the scrolls—which makes me want to cry, "Hey, Judaism is not about scrolls being holy!" There are fundraisers amongst the crowd trying to raise donations for a Jerusalem yeshiva (college for religious studies), telling people, "Every penny you pay will help sustain Israeli rule in Jerusalem." My thoughts drift off: I begin to recall theories about the relationships between religion and politics, religion and nationality.*

*Suddenly, the muezzin's voice from a not-too-distant mosque comes blasting over its own set of loudspeakers, mixing with the Priestly Blessing. For a moment I feel as if peace has come and that prayers are melting in one sincere voice, rising in the sky above us, trying to break open the skies and reach Heaven. On second thought, there is no harmony between the two prayers, and it is clear they are challenging each other. It's a shame. So, in Jerusalem religions do not compete by building towers or by building on one another's remains; they compete by using louder loudspeakers. But the text goes on: "May God lift up His countenance to you and grant you peace." Peace. Peace. Peace. The final word echoes across the massive plaza.*

If religion is meant to uplift, to create a sense of peace and tranquility, to bring about brotherhood and sisterhood, then it must acknowledge pluralism. It has to respect other religions, especially if there is a common belief, namely, a belief in the oneness of God.

*Brother Oscar undertakes pastoral care in his local community. "Do you help non-Franciscans?" we ask. People have moved from one stream of Christianity to another since the sixteenth century, he answers, and so members of the Greek Orthodox community are served as well. "We don't serve stones, we serve people," Brother Oscar adds with a shy smile.*

*This sounds like a recipe for peace and tranquility, Daniel and I comment. "Not at all," sighs Brother Oscar. "Nothing is easy here." The Christians of the Holy Land, it seems, have had to learn to adjust. Between 1948 and 1967, they were a minority among the Muslims; in 1967, Israeli forces occupied the Old City, so now they are a minority among the Jews. But "we" have always been a minority in the Holy Land, explains Brother Oscar, so we learned to live with it. He sees the advantage in it: Because Christians are a minority, they try to get along with the other religions. If George and Muhammad play football together, they'll eventually learn to*

*live with each other. This is the motto of the many church-run schools open to children of all religions.*

During the nineteenth century, foreign superpowers invested in Jerusalem, building hospitals, churches, and pilgrim hostels. This introduced a new architectural style into the old walled city, changing its architectural character from oriental and Ottoman to eclectic. Near the contemporary local municipality building I can still see what used to be the Russian Hospital, built in 1863, the first hospital to be built outside the Old City walls. The roof of this building carries the words of the prophet Isaiah: “For Zion’s sake<sup>19</sup> will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns.” I personally would not choose this sentence, but it suggests that, indeed, for many Jerusalem is about the unvarnished truth and about truth actually winning.

#### DOWNWARD SLIDE: FAITH, POLITICS, AND PARTIES

Faith can deteriorate into something else, though. I find four reasons for this. First, when religion frames faith in the confines of political institutions, it changes the character of faith and establishes walls between faith and plurality, harmony, and tolerance. That is what happens when political parties back religion. Second, the institutionalization of faith leads to preferences about what others ought to do and believe. When this happens, and when the other does not conform to one’s preferences, the other becomes an obstacle to one’s ability to fulfill or even practice one’s faith, and therefore the other becomes a hated enemy. In Jerusalem, the most striking example of this is the intimate relationship among faith, religion, and nationality. Third, when competition between faiths is expressed through competition between religions, faith becomes closely allied to power. But power might corrupt. Fourth, faith is about spirituality. But spirituality might deteriorate into something with a pagan element, such as attributing magical powers, like the power to cure, to objects. Let me begin with the first reason for faith’s deterioration.

When religion is about faith, it is supposed to be about the relationship between human beings and the eternal, the Almighty. *Prima facie*, it is odd if this relationship has any connection at all with political parties. But, unfortunately, it does in Jerusalem. If the reader believes that this connection is inevitable, it is worth mentioning that there were periods when the city’s religious communities apparently did not wish to be involved in politics. The British governor of Jerusalem in the 1920s, Sir Ronald Storrs, wrote in his diaries: “The Orthodox Rabbis, remote from politics and administration, moved in a world of their own. . . .

[They] never occasioned either to me or to the police the faintest trouble whatever. From the administrator's point of view they were ideal subjects, for all they desired was to be left in peace and the practice of their religion."<sup>20</sup>

But one does not have to be ultra-Orthodox and antipolitical to see that faith and religion are not always the same. Faith is often private, whereas religion is not; faith is not driven by the goal of maximizing utility, whereas religion often aims at increasing the utility of its members, the believers.

I asked many Jerusalem residents, secular as well as religious, what "religion" and "being religious" should mean. The answers I received showed me the gap between what religion should be and how it is often practiced. If I generalize and draw conclusions from all these insightful talks, religion as it should be has three elements. First, it is a concern with what exists beyond our senses, beyond the visible. However, unlike philosophy and metaphysics, it is based not on reason but only on faith. "How do you know that God exists?" I asked people, and they all told me about their intuitions without offering any theory. The second element in the way religion is conceived is that God, or the transcendent entity, has superpowers. This entity created the world, and in some religions it intervenes in current affairs. The third element is that we human beings can try to influence the way this power intervenes and we can and should do it by praying or by following customs and laws. Is this the form that religious life takes in Jerusalem today?

On February 2, 2010, a team of policemen went to investigate the death of a twenty-five-year-old woman in the predominantly ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighborhood of Geula, but the body was snatched by dozens of ultra-Orthodox protesters from the hands of the officer in charge because the police post-mortem that would follow this suspected death by unnatural causes (drug overdose) would violate God's law. Wishing to avoid a clash with hundreds of demonstrators, the police fled the scene as screams of "Nazis, go back to Germany!" echoed in their ears.<sup>21</sup> About two hours later, the corpse was finally returned to the police after assurances that it could be buried that night with no autopsy performed.

In an earlier incident, one Saturday in November 2009, some fifteen hundred ultra-Orthodox demonstrators gathered outside the Jerusalem factory of the computer chip manufacturer Intel to protest the company's opening on the Sabbath<sup>22</sup> (even though Intel had promised to schedule only non-Jews to work on this day). Dozens of protesters physically attacked the deputy mayor of Jerusalem, Yitzhak Pindrus, himself an ultra-Orthodox Jew—though from a different political party than the protesters—saying that he had failed to take sufficient action to prevent Intel from opening its plant and employing workers on the Sabbath.

Unfortunately, clashes become even more violent when tensions are not between different political parties but between different ethnic groups or nationalities.

#### DETERIORATION: FAITH AND NATIONALITY

*My office on the Mount Scopus campus of the university faces out over the predominantly Arab East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, where several very good restaurants and smart hotels share the neighborhood with semidetached and detached villas of upper-class Palestinians, and also where the police headquarters is located, along with several government ministries. I open my window to enjoy the light wind that is blowing, and suddenly hear loud voices. A demonstration is in progress, with Arabs protesting against allowing Jews to purchase homes and live in the neighborhood. I feel torn. I live in a neighborhood that is nearly 100 percent Jewish. If we had Jews demonstrating against Arabs purchasing houses in our neighborhood, I would regard them as racists. On the other hand, this is not the same case, because the question here is one of sovereignty. Before the 1967 war, this neighborhood was Jordanian—in other words, Arab. The local residents see the Jews who come and settle there as representing a system that aims at establishing Israeli—that is, Jewish—sovereignty in all parts of Jerusalem, and it seems to me that this might block the way to a peace agreement. But my thoughts drift to this chapter. “We share the same biology, regardless of ideology,” sings Sting. How relevant is that to this case? And what does religion have to say about it? On the one hand, fear of the Other is built into religion. For example, “The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high, and thou shalt come down very low; He shall lend to thee and thou shalt not lend to him; he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail” (Deuteronomy 28:43–44). On the other hand, the Israelites were ordered to love and respect the stranger: “Love ye therefore the stranger; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 10:19); “And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him; but the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:33–34). So the lesson one should learn from the experience of being a stranger (and Jews were strangers for hundreds of years in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America) is to respect and sympathize with the stranger. I know and cherish a very beautiful teaching by Rabbi Eliezer Melamed, which says that the only difference between the other and the Jew is that Jews have to respect others who live among them even more than Jews respect one another because, by being “strangers” or “others” or a minority, in practice non-Jews face great difficulties. My thoughts are interrupted by an ambulance siren. More casualties.*

When faith becomes institutionalized we find that, not only are the believer's preferences about him- or herself affected, but so are his or her preferences about what others ought to do and believe. The reason for this is that if, in order for me to practice my faith, I need a certain set of conditions (for example, a prohibition against working on the Sabbath), then I am in fact expressing preferences about the way I would like others to behave. When others refuse to conform to my will, however, and when, in fact, they have a set of preferences of their own about how they think I should behave, preferences to which I do not conform, then we both become threats to each other's practice of faith. Since this threat or obstacle is not simple but rather has to do with the most important of all my relationships—with the Eternal, with God, maybe also with the salvation of humanity—I inevitably regard as a threat to my own practice not only the other's interruption but even the other's very existence: he or she becomes an enemy; a hated one. This is why, when faith and religion are associated with nationality, outbreaks of violence often result.<sup>23</sup>

*Daniel and I take a tour of the Western Wall tunnels, archeological excavations, begun in the 1970s, that reveal the foundations of the Wailing Wall and other parts of the Temple Mount, as well as many layers of buildings from various historical periods. We join the night tour with a guide who speaks fluent English. With us are a group of tourists from North America and a few families visiting Jerusalem. The guide is an Orthodox Jew who makes no attempt to hide his political views. He says, "For centuries Jews came here, touched the stones, and prayed." Well, I cannot but doubt his accuracy. Maybe more wanted to come, but very few Jews came to Jerusalem, say, in the sixteenth century, or eighteenth century. He continues: "The Muslims built their houses as near as they could to the mosque, on the temple ruins." He takes us to a model of the Second Temple before we enter the tunnels. Flags of Israel stand like sentries near this model. He tells us that the Western Wall is the closest place to where the Holy of Holies stood. The Holy of Holies, or Kodesh Hakodashim in Hebrew, was the most sacred place in the temple. No one could enter except for the high priest, just once a year, on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), when he conducted the offering before God. As the guide tells us the story, I cannot avoid thinking of one idea: exclusion. In biblical times, Jews who did not have the status of ritual purity could not ascend to the Temple Mount. Jews and Christians were barred from ascending to the Mount Temple to pray during the Muslim period; even today, Jews are not allowed to enter the Temple Mount due to a political arrangement between the Muslim council, the Waqf, which controls the Temple Mount and the mosques, and the Israeli government. In fact, religious Jews restrict themselves, and according to Jewish tradition, they may not set foot on the Mount itself. Since it is not known exactly where the Temple stood, and since the Temple contained rooms*

*and areas to which the ritually impure could not go, and since one might be ritually impure for all kinds of reasons, there is a general, all-embracing religious regulation that forbids any Jew from setting foot on the Mount. Yet, some right-wing Jews campaign for the exclusion of non-Jews from the Temple Mount, arguing that the present arrangement undermines Israel's sovereignty in Jerusalem. I recall that several weeks ago, a colleague from London telephoned me to say that a PhD student of his was coming to Israel and could I get in touch with him to see if everything was alright. When this student arrived, I phoned him. He told me that he was an English citizen, born in Pakistan and therefore a Muslim. He was eager to visit the two mosques on Temple Mount: the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. He was here on a tour with other members of an English NGO who wanted to help the Palestinians. I wished him the best, leaving him my phone number in case he needed anything. Two days later he phoned me to report that he had tried to enter the mosques but was stopped by the (Muslim) Waqf representatives. They asked if he was a Muslim (since only Muslims are allowed in), and he said he was. But then they asked him to say the prayers, which, coming from a secular family, he did not know by heart. Therefore they did not let him in. "You see," he added in a soft and gentle voice, "In England I am too Muslim and not English enough; in Jerusalem I am not Muslim enough and too much of an Englishman."*

On September 24, 1996, clashes began between Israeli military forces and Palestinians in Jerusalem. Binyamin Netanyahu, then the Israeli prime minister, had decided to open the Kotel tunnels to tourists. There were rumors among the Palestinians in Jerusalem that Israel was digging beneath the holy mosques. Not only were tensions high, the two leaders—two secular leaders, it should be mentioned—delivered speeches that included religious motifs. Yasser Arafat, the PLO leader, delivered a speech quoting from the Quran, asserting that "God bought from the believers their souls and property because they inherited Eden and will fight for their people . . . will kill and get killed." Netanyahu said that people walking through the tunnel would feel *sela kiyumenu* (the Foundation Stone), the term used in the Jewish Talmud to denote the place from which the world was created and expanded into its current form. Some traditions have it that this was the stone where the Holy of Holies stood. Presumably, at least for some Muslims, this sounded not only like political incorrectness but like religious incorrectness as well. The Muslims have their own Foundation Stone (*Sakhrāh* in Arabic), located in the holy Dome of the Rock mosque (*Masjid Qubbat As-Sakhrāh* in Arabic), which is on the Temple Mount. According to Muslim tradition, the Prophet Muhammad stepped on this rock when rising to Heaven to receive Allah's message and guidance.

The chain of events in 1996 rightly gives one the impression that, in Jerusa-



lem, rocks and stones are so holy that human beings and their lives are secondary in importance. What started out as a demonstration quickly turned violent, with Israeli forces shooting at Palestinian rioters. On September 26, sixty-nine Palestinians and eleven Israelis were killed. Over the succeeding days, the two leaders decided to order a cease-fire and the killing stopped. Altogether, more than one hundred Palestinians and seventeen Israelis had been killed. This reminds me of a great poem by Yehuda Amichai, who lived in Jerusalem. He tells a story of seeing a group of tourists while he walked in the Old City. The tourist guide pointed to a man who had returned from the market, sitting to rest for a moment, and said: "Do you see this man who returned from the market sitting there? Just to the right of him you see an important building." Amichai writes that the Messiah will arrive when tourist guides say: "Do you see this building? Right next to it is a man who has returned from the market."

*Originally, Aaron came from Brisbane, Australia. He meets Daniel, me, and my PhD student, Orly, at Christ Church, Jerusalem, an Anglican church with Jewish elements in its design. Aaron distinguishes between faith and religion. He is a Christian who believes that the Jews are the Chosen People. To show this intimate relationship among God, the Jews, and Jerusalem he says: "God chose Jerusalem as the site for His temple. The binding of Isaac happened here." And to explain why he regards Christianity as a continuation of Judaism, he adds, "In the case of God and Jesus, God is also a father who sacrifices his son." When Aaron compares the three monotheistic religions, he seems to prefer two based on the following distinction. He says: "Muslims go to Mecca because their religion orders them to. Christians coming to Jerusalem do so because of faith. They are not told to do so." Daniel and I look at each other. Is this a kind of a coalition between two religions against the third, Islam? We are not sure. Aaron is cheerful and charming, and his religious conviction is naïve, in the positive sense of the word. But Aaron is an outsider because, no matter how long he stays in Jerusalem, ethnically he is neither Israeli nor Palestinian. So he may feel excluded because his church is not really mainstream, but he surely feels excluded in terms of ethnicity.*

One problem is that tensions exist not only between different religions but also between different ethnic groups within religions and between different sub-religions within religions, such as Protestants, Catholics, and so on. If we look at the different Christian denominations and their relative numbers, we find that approximately a third of Jerusalem's Christians are Latins, less than a third are Greek Orthodox, and the remainder are Armenians, Greek Catholics, various kinds of Protestants, Syriacs, Copts, Maronites, and Ethiopians.<sup>24</sup> With so many



Pilgrims arriving at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher for prayer on Good Friday, April 2, 2010. Photograph © Gregory Gerber. Courtesy of Shutterstock.

subgroups and customs, how could there be peace? But was it ever different? Have things changed over the years? Mark Twain described his impression of *his* visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher thus: “Entering the building, through the midst of the usual assemblage of beggars, one sees on his left a few Turkish guards—for Christians of different sects will not only quarrel, but fight, also, in this sacred place, if allowed to do it. . . . All Christian sects (except the Protestants) have chapels under the roof of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and each must keep to itself and not venture upon another’s ground. It has been proven conclusively that they cannot worship together around the grave of the Savior of the World in peace.”<sup>25</sup>

*I visit the planned site for the Museum of Tolerance. This interesting initiative represents for me the beauty of the city of faith: I imagine it to be about living together in a spiritual rather than a material manner, with people who accept pluralism joining together and holding hands. For me, it would be the jewel in the crown—Jerusalem, of course, being the crown—if the city had a museum able to express this ideal. The plan, initiated by the Simon Wiesenthal Center, was to build something similar to the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles.<sup>26</sup> The architect originally asked to design the museum was Frank Gehry, who had designed the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, the Dancing House in Prague, and many other famous buildings. The plan was to build the museum on the present site of an eight-story underground parking lot and a street-level parking lot. But because an ancient Muslim cemetery, dating from the eleventh century, lies next to the site, Muslims have been trying to stop the plan from proceeding. They claim that the construction of this museum on this site is a deliberate attempt to erase their history. I stand there, looking at the signs of construction that was started and then stopped. The authorities feared that going ahead with construction would create a hostile atmosphere that might deteriorate into riots and violent clashes. Therefore they stopped all work. “This city should go see a shrink,” says a passerby with whom I chat about the problems preventing the building from being built. In July 2009, Haaretz newspaper reported that an interesting coalition, this time between ultra-Orthodox Jews and Muslims, sought to stop this museum from being built: “The initiative hopes to get the site declared ritually impure under Jewish law, due to the fact that the construction has involved unearthing the remains of hundreds of Muslims. Such a declaration would keep religious Jews from visiting the museum.” The Palestinians now claim that they expect Israel to recognize and respect the sanctity of this cemetery and refrain from moving the remains of the people buried there. But in May 2010, Haaretz newspaper published an eight-page report on what had happened on this site. According to this report, one cannot claim that the authorities expressed too much sensitivity toward religious feelings and senti-*

*ments, but it is clear that much of the built environment in the area lies on what used to be a cemetery, later covered by layers of soil. In court, the developers showed documents from the 1920s demonstrating that Amin al-Husayni, the leader of the Muslim community (the mufti) in Jerusalem, initiated construction of a luxurious hotel, the Palace, on the grounds where this cemetery used to be. The contractor reported to the mufti that construction workers had found graves and bones, and the mufti begged him to keep this secret and to transfer all the bones to another site. This indicates, the planners argued, that the objection to this plan is purely nationalistic, rather than religious.*

By now I understand that religion and nationality, and religion and politics, are so thoroughly enmeshed in Jerusalem that they sabotage the city's potential to become truly a place of worship for all religions, a place of spirituality, a place where faith is revealed. When I ask a religious acquaintance how he would describe the relationship between faith and politics in Jerusalem, he replies, "Imagine a large crowd that is standing on the sidewalk, awaiting someone who is about to pass by. The crowd is made up of tall grown-ups, in the midst of whom stands a small child. The child cannot see anything, so he tries jumping up behind all the grown-ups; he also asks people politely to let him through to the front to watch. But they ignore him. That child is Faith. The grown-ups are Politics. That is the relationship between the two in Jerusalem," he sighs.

So is the ethos of Jerusalem based on religion or national aspirations?

*October 28, 2008. At a seminar organized by the Yad Ben Zvi Institute, an independent research and teaching institute in Jerusalem, regarding the ethics of guiding tourists in Jerusalem, the second panel is titled "How to Tell the Story of Jerusalem and Avoid Being Unethical." The panelists seem to see no option but to respect the Other's story. The titles of their talks are: "The Zionist Narrative," "The Christian Narrative," and "The Palestinian Narrative." So maybe all one can do is admit there are different narratives and "live and let live."*

I ask a friend who works in Jerusalem's tourism department what Christian tourists are told by the guides when they visit Jerusalem. She reports that very few tourists are exposed to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in any profound or unbiased manner. On the contrary, when American Christians visit Jerusalem on a pilgrimage tour, they often are told the Christian Zionist story, that the Jews' return to the land of Israel is a prerequisite for the Second Coming of Jesus. Christian Zionists and many evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants believe that Christians are obliged to support the return of Jews to Israel to fulfill God's plan. Indeed, Christian Zionists believe that the modern state of Israel is the

fulfillment of biblical prophecy and that the Jews are God's true people (at least in the Middle East), implying, of course, that any compromise with the Palestinians, the vast majority of whom are Muslim, is out of the question—not for strategic reasons, but for theological ones. God promised the land to the Jews, and if you don't want to upset God, the best thing is to respect Israel's sovereignty over this land.<sup>27</sup> If that is one's religious perspective, then the two characteristics of Jerusalem, religion and national conflict, seem very closely linked.

*March 14 is my wife's birthday and we wanted to celebrate. But it is a very tense day in Jerusalem and we are not in a great mood. The reconstructed Hurva synagogue in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City was officially opened this morning. The synagogue, with a remarkable history dating back to the early 1700s, was destroyed by the Jordanian army when it occupied the Jewish Quarter during Israel's 1948 War of Independence. The Hurva has stood abandoned and in rubble ever since, although parts of it could still be seen. Now it has been restored and it seems that experts all agree that its reconstruction too is remarkable.<sup>28</sup> It so happens that the great-grandfather of the current Speaker of the Israeli parliament, Reuvin Rivlin, was the rabbi who restored this synagogue in the nineteenth century after it had been partly destroyed. Rivlin himself delivers the dedication speech at the event and is clearly extremely moved. But the Haaretz correspondent Yosi Verter reports that the prime minister made it clear to the Knesset Speaker that his speech should include nothing that could annoy the Arabs or Americans, who would be watching the event anxiously, fearing it could descend into more clashes between Arabs and Jews. Rivlin, Verter writes, had to delete some of the sentences he had planned to read. To me, this incident captures the tragedy of Jerusalem and its faith-religion-nationality clash. Even an extremely emotive and poignant event involving faith and worship (namely, the rededication of a historic synagogue with strong personal ties to the speaker) sadly must be hijacked into playing a role in an ongoing violent national dispute. A city whose ethos is faith is forced to bow to the city whose ethos is nationality.*

#### FAITH AND POWER, AND HOW POWER CORRUPTS

Faith and religion can be in tension. Whereas faith is based on intuition, religion is organized around a theory told as a story. This story does not leave room for intuitions that are out of harmony with it. Moreover, whereas faith can be private and personal, religion is not. It is based on a tradition of texts shared by all members of the religion, and on customs that are often meant to be practiced in public. This is where power relationships come in, because these texts, which interpret God's will, are actually a body of texts written by people over many

generations. They establish the basis for a community organized with hierarchy and order to advance the interests of the faith and its adherents. But the interests, like all interests, are defined by the community's leaders, so there is a danger of the leaders' particular interests being given priority rather than the community's interests.

*Brother Oscar is very modest. He tells us that when he ventures out of the monastery into the city, he does not wear his monk's habit. Surprised, we ask him the reason for this, because he seems rather proud of his habit, with its three-knotted cord belt denoting the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. "Well," he replies, "the uniform gives me power and people relate to me as a holy person. I feel uneasy about that. I don't like having power."*

Religion defines its rules of practice in two domains: the private domain, or what people do in their own homes, and the public domain, or what people should do when in the public domain. The latter, as noted earlier, must include preferences about what others ought to do and believe. For example, when walking through Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighborhood of Me'a Shearim, you will likely be struck by the large *pashkvil* notices posted along the way. The name *pashkvil* comes from Yiddish, the language European Jews spoke for centuries and is still used now in ultra-Orthodox communities.<sup>29</sup> *Pashkvilim* (plural) are notices posted on city walls that set out what is acceptable behavior and what is not.

*I walk through the streets of Me'a Shearim. One pashkvil asks women not to dress immodestly in the neighborhood; another calls people to a demonstration against postmortem examinations, which it refers to as sacrilegious; another calls for a boycott of a certain rabbi for his misinterpretation of Jewish law.*

What these *pashkvilim* share is that they turn preferences about what others ought to do and believe into rules: they assume the right of religious authorities to tell people how to dress, why women should not sing in public, whether to attend demonstrations, and so on. When such authority is wielded in the name of religion, it raises the question of power. Why should faith be defined and organized in a top-down manner?

*I stand in the Church of St. John the Baptist in Ein Kerem. The church is built on the site where, according to Christian tradition, St. John the Baptist was born. As we enter the church, we see the symbols of the Franciscan order, the arms of Jesus and Saint Francis. A church built here during the Crusades later collapsed, and a new*

*church was built on its ruins in 1674. The present structure, however, mostly dates from the late nineteenth century. On the church's southern wall is a painting by Francisco Ribalta, a Spanish painter of the Baroque period, depicting the death of St. John the Baptist.*

The story of the death of St. John serves as a good illustration of the way power corrupts. John was a very humble person who ate little more than honey. He lived alone and could be termed an ascetic. He was a moralist, however, and he dared to denounce the marriage of Herod Antipas to Herodias. According to the New Testament, Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee and Perea, was married to the daughter of the Nabatean king Aretas. But during a visit to Rome to secure the territory of his late brother Herod Philip, he met his brother's widow, Herodias, and fell in love with her. In order to marry her, Herod Antipas divorced his wife. Meanwhile, John the Baptist had gained a reputation as a preacher, and his baptism in the River of Jordan, several hours' walk from Jerusalem, was probably also famous. The River of Jordan was on the very edge of Perea, the area governed by Herod Antipas. Therefore, John was conceived as a kind of political threat to the ruler or, more accurately, a moralist who challenged political power in the name of religion.<sup>30</sup> John dared to denounce Herod's marriage, and for this Herod threw him in jail. According to the gospel of Matthew, on Herod's birthday, Herodias's daughter, Salome (Shlomit in Hebrew), dances for him and in return he offers to give her whatever her heart desires. Following her mother's advice, Salome asks for John the Baptist's head, which is delivered to her on a charger. This cruelty and the unbearable lightness of killing that power allows has shocked many artists, including Heinrich Heine,<sup>31</sup> who imagines a different ending to the story, one in which Salome falls in love with John's head.<sup>32</sup>

*Daniel and I meet Orly, my PhD student, near the Jaffa Gate. Orly used to be a tourist guide and has written several chapters in guidebooks on Jerusalem for people who take their travel seriously. We meet near the Old City wall. The wall is rather long—4,018 meters, with an average height of 12 meters, and an average width of 2.5 meters. The wall has thirty-four towers and seven gates, each with a different name.*

*Not far from where we stand, two soldiers approach two Palestinians, asking to see their papers. I feel uneasy. Passersby pay no attention. The two Palestinians show their papers and move on, but not before the soldiers conduct a body search. Alright, I think to myself, security people search my body when I visit a shopping mall, an airport, a train station, or even the university where I work, so what do I sense is wrong here? Perhaps it feels wrong because the Old City of Jerusalem should be dif-*

*ferent; perhaps we would have loved it if people who visit the city could feel at home. Orly asks me why I think there are walls in Jerusalem. I think to myself that it is so the security forces can check people and body search them, but I put aside my cynicism and regret and try to be a good pupil. "To protect the inhabitants of the city, of course," I say. "No, no," says Orly. "These walls could never protect a city." And she is right—I never thought of it like that. The walls of Jerusalem are gentle and beautiful, not monumental and strong. Orly explains that during the rule of the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (mid-sixteenth century), Jerusalem was not considered a very important city except for religious reasons. However, Muslims came from all over the Ottoman Empire to visit the city—which was in fact a village of seventy-nine hundred people (estimates are that 80 percent were Muslim and the rest Jewish). It seems that those who came complained that you could not see the city from afar and that its appearance was unappealing and filthy. The city walls had been destroyed in 1219 and never rebuilt. So Suleiman ordered a set of walls to be built (in 1535) in order to impress visitors, make them feel that this was a holy and important city, and make their journey seem worthwhile.*

*I recall standing on the ramparts of the Jaffa Gate in 1974, if I remember correctly. I was a teenager then and loved walking around the Old City. One day I was on the walls (you can still climb them and walk along the ramparts—which I thoroughly recommend!), when I heard a commotion. A group of some twenty people began demonstrating at the Jaffa Gate entrance into the Old City. I was less than three meters above them, standing on the ramparts, and I could see Meir Kahana, who at the time was a recent immigrant to Israel from the United States and held very radical ideas. He later formed a racist party that was eventually outlawed. On that occasion, Kahana was demonstrating against allowing Palestinian refugees to return to the villages of Ikrit and Bir'am, which they had been forced to leave in the 1948 war. In the present, I can recall how I felt as I stood there, hating Kahana deeply for his racist ideology. I imagined myself as a soldier from the sixteenth century, when the walls were built, protecting Jerusalem from this lunatic. It seems that nothing has changed in the interim, and Jerusalem has needed to cope with plenty more lunatics of all stripes.*

More than other places in Jerusalem, the Last Supper Room symbolizes the intense hatred that can exist between religions. Ask a tourist guide to take you there and you will be led to a second-story room on Mount Zion that commemorates the Upper Room in which, according to the New Testament, Jesus ate the Passover meal that became his "last supper." As a matter of fact, this building is definitely not the one in which Jesus celebrated the Passover meal because it dates only to the twelfth century. Some archeologists do claim, however, that the



Little Church of God, which existed on this site on Mount Zion during the second century CE and is mentioned in various writings, was built where Jesus and his followers had gathered.

The history of the churches built on this site encapsulates the tragedy of religious hatred in a number of ways. First, the Last Supper is often associated with the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot, who, according to Christian tradition, approached and kissed Jesus, a prearranged sign which identified him to the Roman soldiers, who then arrested him. The story fueled anti-Semitic outrage and persecution for centuries. Second, the churches later built on the site were repeatedly destroyed through hatred. The first church, constructed during the second century, was reconstructed in the fourth century after the persecution of Christians ended.<sup>33</sup> When the Persians attacked Jerusalem in 614, however, they burned the rebuilt church. When the Crusaders reached Jerusalem in the twelfth century, the church was in ruins but they built the room (the Cenacle) that we see today. When the Crusaders were defeated, the church was once more destroyed but the Cenacle was spared. The Franciscans tried to renovate it during the fourteenth century and it was used as a Franciscan monastery until 1524, when the Cenacle became a Muslim mosque under the Ottomans. In the early twentieth century, the German organization Deutscher Verein vom Heiligen Lande built a new church around this room—the Hagia Maria Sion Abbey (also known as Dormition Abbey).

*It is early morning, Easter 2008, and I march with a crowd of hundreds toward the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Russians in dark clothing holding huge wooden crosses; Brazilians marching cheerfully, praying in a way that reminds me of their samba; Africans feeling so emotional that when they walk, it looks as if their legs do not touch the earth. The archbishop is out in front, leading the procession. He knocks on the church door.*

The key to the door is held by a Muslim. It is said that the various Christian sects could not agree among themselves on which of them would hold the key, so they eventually gave it to a Muslim. Inside the church is the eleventh station of the Via Dolorosa (where Jesus walked carrying the cross, and where, according to tradition, he was nailed to it), which belongs to Catholics. The twelfth station (dedicated to Jesus' mother, Mary, and where the crucifixion took place), belongs to the Greek Orthodox and is adorned with lights. The stone on which Jesus' body was placed after the crucifixion lies between the two stations. The various sections of the church, or *ambulatorium* in Latin, are administered by different Christian sects: the Armenian, Catholic, Greek, and so on.

*Several minutes pass while the procession stands silent. Eventually, a tiny window opens and the key is passed out. Someone climbs up a ladder and opens the church doors. Suddenly, in the chaos of entering the church, everybody mixes; suddenly, we are all human beings.*

### STONES WITH HUMAN HEARTS

*Accompanied by Orly and Brother Oscar, Daniel and I climb up to the roof of the Franciscan monastery's guesthouse for pilgrims. The muezzin's voice calling people to prayers mixes with the church bells and the strong wind that blows on this sunny but rather chilly day. From here, there is a great view of the Jewish graveyard on the Mount of Olives, where for centuries Jews sought to be buried, so that when the Messiah came they would be the first to enter Jerusalem.<sup>34</sup> This belief is based on the Jewish Midrashic commentaries on the Bible, which say that while other souls would need to "travel" long distances from wherever they were to Jerusalem, the people who were buried here would be spared the arduous journey. It was believed that the Mount of Olives would tear in two, and that the dead would rise from its depths and walk to Jerusalem.<sup>35</sup> But there were other rumors about those who were buried on the Mount of Olives: they would not be subject to worms eating their flesh or be beaten by angels, who often beat the dead, it seems.<sup>36</sup> I look at the Mount of Olives. There are more than seventy thousand graves, all reflecting the sun's light. A thought comes to mind: okay, so I don't believe in all this coming back to life stuff; but suppose it were true. What would happen if these dead people all rose on the same day and marched into Jerusalem? No, I am not worried about how we would cope with them. . . . I imagine the Old City store owners would be happy to see them. What I'm worried about is what they would think. Would they take one look at what the city has become, feel it's not what they thought it would be, and want to rush back to their graves? Could they bring peace and tranquility back to my beloved city?*

At the time of the British mandate in Palestine, there were clashes between Muslims and Jews who wished to pray at the Wailing Wall. The military governor of Jerusalem, Ronald Storrs, asked the chief rabbi of Jerusalem, Abraham Isaac Kook (spelled Kuk in Storrs's memoirs), why Jews insisted on praying next to this old stone wall. He offered to build a similar wall somewhere else. After all, he said, they are only stones. Rabbi Kook looked at him in wonder and replied, "There are people with hearts made of stone but this wall is made of stones with human hearts."<sup>37</sup>

Many Jerusalemites are proud of living in a city where spirituality is more important than materialism and wealth. Jerusalem students are far poorer than

their Tel Aviv peers. In Jerusalem, the elite consists of professors, academics, rabbis, and government officials; in Tel Aviv, it consists of businesspeople and lawyers. So Jerusalemites say that theirs is a city of spirituality. But where does one draw the line between spirituality and paganism or fetishism? When do objects become replacement for God? Yehuda Atzba relates a story told to him by Rabbi Parla, who was the rabbi of the Kotel, the Wailing Wall: "Once I saw a very old Jew standing kissing the Wall, kissing it and kissing it, again and again. This seemed odd, so I went over to him and asked him: 'Friend, why are you kissing the Wailing Wall so much?' The old man looked at me and said: 'What can I do? It is the Kotel kissing me.'"<sup>38</sup>

Spirituality is often tied to superstition. Yona Ba-Gad tells this story: "When I was young, I was sick with diphtheria. In those days, children who caught diphtheria died. My older sister died, and it was certain that I would die, too. The doctor was determined to save this child. Everyone decided that the answer was to confuse the Angel of Death so that he wouldn't enter our house a second time. So that the Angel would not know it was me, they burned all my clothes and asked a childless young couple to buy me new clothes and bring them to the hospital. Then they dressed me up and sent me home with the young couple as if I were their child. I recovered and was never ill again."<sup>39</sup>

Of course, Mrs. Ba-Gad does not believe that the Angel of Death got confused. But if I told this story to many Jerusalemites, they would take it seriously: the very belief in the ability to deceive the Angel of Death gave this child and her family the strength to resist and defeat this illness. So the line drawn between spirituality and superstition is unclear, and perhaps there is some sense of mysticism in spirituality. However, it is possible for spirituality to decline into a form of paganism and adoration of ancient stones, as opposed to the idea they represent. Placing too much weight on the irrational and the mysterious, on avoiding the evil eye, and on what is beyond us diminishes the importance of human beings and their relationship with faith and religion, and the supernatural takes their place. In Jerusalem, many conceive that places and stones are the habitation of the supernatural. Every religion has its Foundation Stone, for example. But I fail to see a Foundation Idea of the person, the human being. Moreover, when stones and buildings become so important and crucial to a religion, the distinction between the monotheistic religions and paganism becomes vague and blurred.

*At Hebrew University, I teach a course on modern political theory. There are 250 students in the class, but one student always sits in the front row. She is very bright and enthusiastic. She often sees me after class to ask questions. Judging from her economic and social views, I would guess that she is a socialist. One day, the class*

*deals with modern conceptions of punishment. We somehow reach a very interesting discussion on suffering and whether criminals should suffer more than their victims. Suddenly, this student launches into the debate: "But suffering in this world is because of our sins in a previous life," she asserts. I ask her what she means and she replies—and I quote: "We Jews, this is what we believe: that suffering in this life is due to a sin we committed in a previous life." Very gently, I note that Judaism does not believe in previous incarnations. She looks at me in astonishment and says, "Of course we do; this is what I learned at home," emphasizing "I." The students started to lose patience. "What are you, some kind of Buddhist?" they ask.*

According to a story about Hebrew University, during the 1960s a great scholar by the name of David Flusser gave a very popular course on the history of Christianity. Students were in awe of him: his breadth of knowledge was phenomenal and he was highly charismatic, but also very authoritarian. Students never dared to argue with him and, to avoid his calling on them, they knew better than to sit near the front. But one student kept sitting in the very front row. One day, while Professor Flusser was lecturing on Jesus, she suddenly stood up and addressed the class, shouting, "This is rubbish, this is completely wrong; the professor does not know what he is talking about!" There was a deafening silence; people were utterly shocked. How dare she say so? "And you, do you know what you are talking about?" one student queried. "Sure," the woman replied. "I have connections to the One."<sup>40</sup>

*Once, about fifteen years ago, I arranged to meet a colleague from abroad who was staying at a certain Jerusalem hotel. On reaching the hotel, I saw a group of people gathered round a woman who was lying on the ground, singing prayers, whispering, and crying. A few minutes later, along came an ambulance and she was taken away gently by two men. "Another case of Jerusalem syndrome," said the bellboy. That was the first time I heard of this syndrome. I later discovered that it was a well-known psychiatric disorder.*

Indeed, spirituality can deteriorate into many kinds of superstition. The Jerusalem syndrome is a case in point. Yair Bar-El, who is probably the leading expert on the Jerusalem syndrome, works in the Kfar Shaul Hospital, a public psychiatric hospital. He argues that some people (often members of fringe Christian groups, and possibly slightly unbalanced before arriving in Jerusalem) come to believe they have a specific mission here related to Armageddon or the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. In addition, there is a more grounded group of people, who are completely sane before they arrive but something happens to them when they reach Jerusalem. The encounter with this city and its atmosphere brings out

the Jerusalem syndrome. “The same clinical picture always emerges,” says Dr. Bar-El. “It begins with general anxiety and nervousness, and then the tourist feels a pressing need to visit the holy sites. First, he undertakes a series of purification rituals, like . . . washing himself over and over before he dons white clothes. . . . Then he begins to cry or to sing Biblical or religious songs in a very loud voice. The next step is an actual visit to the holy places, most often from the life of Jesus. The afflicted tourist then begins to deliver a sermon, demanding that humanity become calmer, purer, and less materialistic.”<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, Protestants with ultra-Orthodox Jewish backgrounds are most likely to experience this syndrome. The character they most commonly identify with is John the Baptist, and the episodes usually occur after they visit the River Jordan, where they undergo a ceremony of purification. The syndrome is not pleasant, but neither is it dangerous, and it usually passes within a few days. However, some people with Jerusalem syndrome experience severe anxiety attacks and must be hospitalized. At least one case had serious political and religious implications: a young Australian, Dennis Rohan, set fire to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in 1969. Many in the Muslim world were initially convinced an Israeli was responsible before the police arrested Rohan, who confessed.

#### CITY WITHOUT CITIZENS

*“I am not interested in holy stones,” a former student of mine once told me when I asked why she was going to migrate to Tel Aviv. “I want to live in a secular liberal city,” she added. “I need work, nightclubs, pubs, restaurants where I can eat what I want to eat and not what the Bible wants me to eat,” she said, referring to Jerusalem’s relative lack of nonkosher restaurants. I am interested in where my former students end up living. I find that within three years after graduation, most of them leave Jerusalem. One reason they give is the lack of interesting jobs.*

The average unemployment payment in Jerusalem in 2008 was 107 shekels (about U.S. \$30) a day, a lot less than the average payment in Tel Aviv (140 shekels). The difference in unemployment payments is an indicator of the difference in affluence, as it compares not the richest populations but rather the more disadvantaged groups in society. At the start of 2010, 11.38 percent of Jerusalem businesses reported themselves at risk of bankruptcy or closure, compared to 7.02 percent in Tel Aviv.<sup>42</sup> Many Jerusalemites do not work. Whereas many Palestinians in Jerusalem find it hard to obtain jobs, many ultra-Orthodox men do not want to work, preferring to spend their time studying the Bible and the Talmud. Children make up 40 percent of Jerusalem’s population, which is higher than the Israeli average because Orthodox Jews and many Arabs tend to have

large families. Indeed, 31 percent of families in Jerusalem have four or more children.<sup>43</sup> Looking only at the Arab population of Jerusalem, the figure is 5.3 children per family. Fifty-five percent of families in Tel Aviv consist of two adults with no children, versus 19 percent in Jerusalem.<sup>44</sup>

“Orthodox Jews throughout the world work. Why is it different in Jerusalem?” asked one of my students. Most students in Israel work to finance their studies. They go to college rather late, mostly because they are drafted for military service—two years of service for women and three years for men. By the time they go to college, they have to work and study at the same time. So they are quite resentful when they see Orthodox men who were exempted from military service by a historical political agreement between the ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties and the Israeli government. The typical complaint voiced by secular students at my university is: “These people are not drafted and they don’t work, but I am drafted and I have to work and pay my taxes so that they can study full-time in their *yeshivas* while I can afford to study only part-time at university!” This complaint usually ends, “So, I’ll finish my degree and go and rent a flat in Tel Aviv.” Noam, one of my PhD students, was politically very active in Jerusalem but finally gave up. He went to live in Tel Aviv and joined a local grassroots party, A City for Everyone, which ran candidates in the local elections and is now very active in the municipality. Anat, another PhD student, moved to Tel Aviv a few years ago after she found a good job there while still studying for her master’s. “It is such a fun city and so free,” she said, referring to Tel Aviv.

When young people leave Jerusalem in such numbers, it raises concerns that the body of taxpayers will be too small to meet the city’s needs. “Worshipping God is fine, but we also need citizens,” said another of my students. Indeed, the question this raises is: Can there be civicism without citizens?

*Several people with whom I discuss the question of migration from Jerusalem say that this is a price Jerusalem perhaps has to pay for being a city where modesty prevails. “Modesty?!” interrupted another interviewee, a secular militant. “Jerusalem has become a twin city to Tehran.”*

He was referring to the October 2008 dedication of the Chords Bridge at the Western entrance to Jerusalem, which dominates its landscape. The bridge was designed by the world-renowned architect Santiago Calatrava, who cites the Bible as the inspiration for his design, specifically Psalm 150:3, which reads, “Praise Him with a blast of the trumpet; praise Him with the lyre and harp!” The bridge resembles a harp pointing heavenward, signifying that Jerusalem is a meeting place between man and God.<sup>45</sup> But not only did the bridge cost nearly seventy million U.S. dollars, making it controversial in a city that is very poor,

but a performance by a troupe of local dancers at the dedication ceremony ended up annoying many among the secular population. This is what the *Washington Post* said about the incident:

A troupe of dancers between the ages of 13 and 16 had rehearsed for weeks in anticipation of the opening ceremony. . . . Hours before the ceremony began, however, the dancers were told that they would need a new wardrobe. Their short-sleeve shirts and ankle-length white trousers were simply too revealing. And their dances—involving tambourines and balloons—were downright “promiscuous,” according to the city’s deputy mayor. So the girls took the stage instead in flowing brown cloaks and—despite the summer heat—black woolen caps. Forced to cut their most suggestive moves, they barely danced at all. “They stood like statues,” the group’s artistic director, Yaniv Hoffman, later told reporters. The city’s ultra-Orthodox community, which dominated the crowd, heartily approved. The reaction among secular Israelis was less enthusiastic. “The Taliban Are Here” was the banner headline in the next day’s *Yediot Ahronot*, Israel’s largest-circulation daily paper. “In the end, what we will remember from the ceremony that took place last night is sad and embarrassing and not at all respectable,” the paper intoned. . . . Yair Ettinger, writing in the daily *Haaretz*, said that for Jerusalem’s less devout, the night was “yet another stage in the city’s ongoing fall into the hands of ultra-Orthodox extremists.”<sup>46</sup>

THE ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT:  
FROM RELIGION TO BENEVOLENCE

*The management of the Israeli Basketball League is intent on having cheerleaders perform during timeouts. This bothers Hapoel Jerusalem fans, who express their displeasure with whistles while the girls dance. I always imagined that the girls’ semi-naked outfits bothered them. But I found that the reason goes much deeper. “It is not only that many of the fans are religious and the league management should respect that,” explained one of the fans when I asked him why people were upset. “It is much more than that. You see, Jerusalem is a city where people dress modestly, and having cheerleaders is like showing off. We are not that kind of city.” Daniel and I go to a game and it reminds him of something he once read about Jerusalem: that Herod the Great, a Roman Jewish “client” king, wished to introduce entertainment to the city, and the “puritanical” locals refused to let him because physical purity was a metaphor for spiritual purity.*

As discussed earlier, Jerusalem is a city of spirituality and culture. In 2008, there were twenty-five public libraries serving the general public in Jerusalem and eight public libraries serving the Orthodox community alone. In these Orthodox community libraries, most of the subscribers were children. The average loan was thirty-one books a year, compared to sixteen books in libraries frequented by non-Orthodox Jews. Library users are generally rather poor. In January 2008, a new national bill was passed making it illegal to charge for library membership. This resulted in rapid growth in the number of members, which soon became double the number of members in 2006.<sup>47</sup>

An important question regarding Jerusalem is whether those with a wholly secular lifestyle can live in and enjoy Jerusalem to the same extent as people who accept religion and faith or are religious. My friend Dani thinks the city is divided anyway, so this question does not matter much: each group enjoys only part of the city. “We don’t talk to each other, we don’t mix; they live in their ghettos, we live in ours,” he says. Trying to find examples to counter this argument, I mention an ultra-Orthodox student we both teach. “Yes,” he replies, “he is one guy among thousands we have taught.” I mention the Orthodox guys I join when I go to basketball games. “Yes,” he answers, “about ten out of hundreds of thousands.” But then I think: Is this any different from, say, Detroit, where whites and blacks don’t always mix, or London, where upper-class and working-class people don’t mix? How often does someone from North Oxford ever visit South Oxford?

Suppose someone with an entirely secular lifestyle migrates to Jerusalem. Suppose this individual chooses this not because she likes the city’s ethos but because she or her spouse works there, or because she needs to take care of her elderly parents. Does this mean that she must accept the ethos? Does she have to respect ultra-Orthodox people and refrain from driving down their streets on Saturday? My answer would be yes. We often have to compromise in life. To some extent, people must respect the ethos of faith and religion in Jerusalem because living in the city denotes tacit acceptance of its ethos. At the time of the Salman Rushdie affair in England, a similar argument was made about Muslims who migrate to England: the act of migration implies their willingness to accept English mores and culture. This means that they must learn to accept the lack of censorship of books in England—even if they are insulted by the content (I have in mind Rushdie’s book *Satanic Verses*). The same goes for secular people who migrate to Jerusalem: they should accept its ethos and respect it. If I go to a city in Saudi Arabia, I am declaring that I agree not to consume alcoholic drinks in public. Settling in Jerusalem says something similar: that one accepts and respects the ethos of faith and religion in the city. But what about people born in the city who decide to follow a completely secular way of life? Well, life is not



perfect, and I believe one has to respect the ethos of the city, provided that one's basic rights are also respected (see our introduction, where we make this argument in detail).

Yet the picture is more complicated. Jerusalem and religious people have to learn a lesson, too. Simply, it is that the ethos of religion has to respect rights. Recently, a campaign started in the city to oppose mixed-gender buses on certain bus routes. The ultra-Orthodox community demanded that the buses used by their community should have separate seating for men and women; some of them even demanded that women not be allowed on certain buses. The bus company agreed to the demand, but the Supreme Court issued a restraining order against it. The Orthodox community also wanted bus drivers not to use the entertainment radio on their buses. July 21, 2009, saw clashes between secular and ultra-Orthodox groups after ultra-Orthodox people had thrown stones at non-gender-separated buses traveling through their neighborhood in April. It seems obvious that, since such discriminatory practice harms human rights, it should not be part of the Jerusalem ethos and secular people should not have to respect it. But refraining from driving down certain streets in ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods on Saturdays does not infringe on any fundamental right or humiliate those required to respect it.

I would expect the Jewish ultra-Orthodox, Muslim, and Christian communities to respect the secular communities as well. More than once I have seen ultra-religious people spitting at other people to express disapproval of their dress, rather than bowing to the other's contempt for their religious sensitivities. I think this devalues faith. If faith causes people to hate others or disrespect them to the point of spitting at them, then there must be something wrong with that faith. But if people can see the image of God in every person, then their faith is very worthy of respect. It would be tragic if Jerusalem were to deteriorate from being the City of God to become the city of people who have no God in their hearts.

*Daniel and I drive to Jerusalem from a conference in northern Israel with the philosopher and Jerusalem resident Avishai Margalit. We tell him about our research for this book, and when the conversation turns to Jerusalem, he smiles and says, "I love Jerusalem; I don't like it." Later at home, I discover this story by Avishai in the New York Review of Books. It has in it the same eccentric woman mentioned earlier, Keshet La'echad, but I'll focus on another part of the story.*

*When I was a child Jerusalem was more like a large village than a city. As in a village, there were some village idiots walking about, trailed by groups of giggling children. . . . Another village idiot called himself King David. He*

wore a black beret and had a round childish face and blue eyes expressing great innocence. As the King of Israel, he would grant us, his followers, various sections of Jerusalem. One day he decided to appoint me ruler of Mount Zion. He put his hand on my head and was about to bless me with his strange ceremony of investiture. At my side stood an Arab boy named Faras, who worked for a Greek Orthodox priest in our neighborhood.

*“What about me?” asked Faras.*

*“He’s an Arab,” said one of the children.*

*King David thought for a moment, reconsidered, put his hand on both our heads, and appointed the two of us, his Jewish and Arab vassals, joint rulers of Mount Zion.*<sup>48</sup>

We learn from this story that for different groups to live together and truly respect Jerusalem, they must want it whole. They should feel that it is more important for everyone to enjoy Jerusalem, and for Jerusalem to remain whole, than to contemplate the alternative—tearing Jerusalem in two. In the Bible we find the same rationale in the story of the Judgment of King Solomon. I refer here to the story’s political wisdom. The Bible recounts the following incident:

Then there came into the king’s presence two women who were prostitutes and stood before him. The first said: “My lord, this woman and I share the same house, and I gave birth to a child when she was there with me. On the third day after my baby was born she too gave birth to a child. . . . During the night this woman’s child died because she overlaid it, and she got up in the middle of the night, took my baby from my side while I, your servant, was asleep, and laid it in her bosom, putting her dead child in mine. When I got up in the morning to feed my baby, I found him dead; but when I looked at him closely, I found that it was not the child that I had borne.” The other woman broke in: “no, the living child is mine; yours is the dead one.” So they went on arguing in the king’s presence. The king . . . said: “Fetch me a sword.” They brought in a sword and the king gave the order: Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other. At this the woman who was the mother of the living child, moved with love for her child, said to the king: “Oh, sir, let her have the baby; whatever you do, do not kill it.” The other said: “Let neither of us have it, cut it in two.” Thereupon the king gave judgment: “Give the living baby to the first woman; do not kill it, She is the mother.”<sup>49</sup>

Those who want Jerusalem to be theirs and only theirs, those who desire to possess it, who interpret religion as legitimizing constraints on what others be-

lieve and do—such people, in my view, are not genuine Jerusalemites. Those who honestly love Jerusalem should be ready to let others enjoy it and envisage others enjoying it even if the others' enjoyment meant that they themselves would enjoy it less, or enjoy less of it. They are like the real mother in the story, the mother who loves her child more than she loves herself. The effect of all these religious and political wars on Jerusalem is very similar to the effect of King Solomon's sword: once the baby is cut up it will be dead; it can never become whole again. The way to prevent this is for different religions to be allowed to flourish in the city so that Jerusalem remains whole and lives on as the city of God and faith.<sup>50</sup>

But for this to occur, the residents of Jerusalem would have to be not only modest but benevolent and compassionate as well.

*It is late December 2009 and bitterly cold when I accompany a group of students on a trip to Ein Kerem. We enter one of the most beautiful convents imaginable: Notre Dame de Sion. Here we are met by one of the nuns, who takes us on a tour of the gardens. The convent was built in the nineteenth century by Alphonse Ratisbonne, son of a wealthy French Jewish family. When he was young, his brother converted to Christianity, which deeply hurt the young Alphonse. However, on January 20, 1852, he had a dream in which Mary ("Marie" in French), the mother of Jesus, appeared (he subsequently added Marie to his name). He felt his mission in life was to convert Jews to Christianity and traveled to Palestine in 1855 with this in mind. The Druze were fighting the Christians in Lebanon at the time and Ratisbonne went to Lebanon, returning to Palestine with a group of orphans. He decided to build a home for them, and on January 20 (again that date), 1861, while walking in Ein Kerem, he saw a rainbow stretching from Marie's fountain to the hill where the convent now stands. He interpreted this as a sign that he should build the orphanage on the hill. Sister Catherine, our guide, has lived in Jerusalem for thirty years. Her mission is to build positive relationships between Christians and Jews and to explain to Christians that it is possible to be a good Christian and love Jews, too. She teaches Judaism at the University of Bethlehem, which is Palestinian. We stroll through the gardens: fifteen acres of beautiful gardens, trees, vegetables, and fruits grown by the nuns. We sit on one of the many benches where people can sit and contemplate.*

*My memories are sweet though not easy to look back on. Forty years ago exactly, my father died after a long illness. My mother, a very young widow with two children, was exhausted from caring for my father throughout his illness. After the seven days of ritual mourning, she looked for a peaceful place to relax. She brought my brother and me to this convent. In those days, the convent had a very modest and simple guest house. It was a very relaxing week for me, I recall. But I also remember*

*being somewhat embarrassed. Surrounded by walls (except in one direction, which faced the gentle green Judean Hills) and by nuns, I felt rather out of place. Here was I, a young Jewish boy, and there on the wall above my bed was a cross and a picture of Jesus. At night I used to pray to God not to be angry with me for spending time in a convent. And yet I could feel the warm hospitality; I could see that my mother was soothed. I could feel the tranquility of the place entering her and the atmosphere of universal acceptance bringing her relief. Many years later, my mother told me that one of her worst fears about being such a young widow was that her friends were all couples whereas she was a single mother. This fear had a strong impact on her. Four years later, after the 1973 war between Israel and Egypt and Syria, my mother, who was a psychiatrist, devoted all her energy to treating the young widows of soldiers who had died in the war. And following the peace agreement with Egypt some years later, she joined Egyptian psychiatrists in studying ways to help war widows from both sides. When she died several years ago, we received a letter of condolence from a Palestinian psychologist with whom she had also worked.*

■ ■ ■

*It is late Sunday night when I wrap up my work at the university and hurry outside to catch a taxi. As I enter the taxi, the driver looks at me: "Hey, don't you recognize me?" I peer at him through tired eyes, and in the dark I see B, a Jerusalem Arab who used to work at the university's vegetarian cafeteria, where I often eat. After some nostalgic chit-chat about the university, gossip about the lecturers, and so on, he points to the windshield, and says: "Brand new, just had it fitted today." "What happened?" I ask, and he recounts that the previous day, Saturday, he had picked up a tourist and driven through an ultra-Orthodox neighborhood, down a main street. This street is supposed to be open to traffic on the Sabbath (in predominantly ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods, some streets are closed on the Sabbath, but this one isn't). To his astonishment, an ultra-Orthodox passerby threw a stone at his car, shattering his windshield. "I could have been killed," he sighs. "It is so stupid." "And so primitive, throwing stones at people," I sympathize. I mention that the Bible talks about stoning sinners. "Yes," he replies. "This is Jerusalem: Arabs stone Jews, Jews stone Arabs, and the ultra-Orthodox stone everybody."*

## THE CITY OF LANGUAGE(S)

Language is distinctive to human beings, not to particular cities. But which language matters when and where can be the cause of social conflict in multilingual settings. How do we feel when our mother tongue is threatened with extinction? And when other languages offer more economic opportunities? Only when such issues become matters of public debate are we really made aware of the value of language, both in the monetary sense and in the psychological sense of feeling at home in the world. And if there's one thing we can say about Montreal, it's that people care about their language(s). The city has been the center of conflicts over language ever since the French explorer Jacques Cartier mistakenly stumbled on the almond-shaped island in 1535 (he was looking for China, and the rapids that he thought prevented him from reaching its wealthy markets have been named "Lachine" in honor of his quest). It's an ongoing conflict, but I think this story can be told in ways that foretell a somewhat happy ending for the Francophone and Anglophone communities. I spent nearly half my life there—from 1964 to 1986—just when things were most exciting, or turbulent, depending on one's perspective.

The chapter opens with a discussion of the linguistic conflicts between Canada's First Nations and the European settlers and merchants. The next section focuses on the "conquest" of the Francophone by the Anglophone community, followed by a section on the Francophone "reconquest." The chapter ends with an argument that a broader and more inclusive form of civicism has emerged from the wreckage of the language wars, along with a reminder that one attachment—to the Montreal Canadiens hockey team—has long transcended linguistic boundaries.

### WHICH SOLITUDES?

*I grew up thinking that Montreal was composed of two long-established linguistic communities: the French and the English. In school, I was taught which Europeans had "discovered" which parts of North America, as though the people already there*

*didn't count. In fact, I didn't really question my prejudices until I met my first girlfriend, Kathy, who was born in Canada's far north to an Inuit mother and a white father who abandoned her at an early age.*

The historian Marcel Trudel tells the story of Cartier's encounter with what we now call Canada's First Nations.<sup>1</sup> At the time, French was the language of elites in Europe, and Cartier and his fellow explorers spoke only that language, without any felt need to learn others. Thus, when he first encountered members of the Micmac nation, "conversation" could only take the form of hand and finger movements. When the Micmacs, cod fishermen who were keen to do business with another client, approached Cartier's ship, the French explorer panicked and resorted to a less ambiguous mode of communication: he fired warning shots over their heads. A few days later, he encountered members of the Iroquois nation and again resorted to ineffective hand signals. Frustrated, Cartier decided to embark on the first experiment with bilingualism in Quebec's history: he captured two Iroquois and brought them to France, where they learned some French and served as interpreters during Cartier's next trip. To Cartier's consternation, the two interpreters also learned to play the game of commerce and informed fellow Iroquois that they should ask for more in return when bartering for items.

Europe withdrew from the Saint Lawrence River basin for a half century or so, and the next French adventurer, Samuel Champlain, discovered to his dismay that the Iroquois community in Montreal—Hochelega, as it was then known—had moved elsewhere and his hard-earned Iroquois vocabulary was useless for communicating with the Montagnais and Algonquin peoples that had replaced them. The linguistic misunderstandings had tragic consequences for Champlain's men—eighteen out of twenty-six died from scurvy because they did not have the vocabulary necessary to procure the Iroquois herbal remedy that had saved Cartier and his men.

This time the French became more serious about language learning. They decided to immerse themselves in the language communities of the native peoples as well as try to teach French to the locals. In 1610, a young Frenchman named Étienne Brûlé spent the winter with the Algonquins and was perhaps the first case of what anthropologists call "going native": he returned to France dressed like an Algonquin. In 1620, a young Montagnais named Patetchouan was sent to France, where he learned both French and Latin. But when he was brought back to Canada after five years, the French discovered that he had lost his native tongue and could not serve as interpreter as they had hoped.

French missionaries made more serious efforts to learn and translate the languages of First Nations, and in 1632 they published a 132-page Huron diction-

ary, the first of its kind for a language from North America. Although the Huron community was not large, their language was the language of commerce in the Great Lakes region and Europeans were keen to learn it. But the Hurons were defeated by the Iroquois fifteen years later, and the Huron language ceased to have “international” status.

For the seventeenth and much of the eighteenth centuries, the experience of bilingualism meant that the French had to learn the languages of First Nations rather than the other way around. Why is that? Again, mainly for commercial reasons: the First Nations controlled commerce and the French were in a position of numerical inferiority. More surprising, the indigenous languages were also used by the French and the English to communicate among themselves! They hadn’t learned each other’s languages in Europe, and the native languages used in North America were the only common ones. That all changed when the French were defeated by the English in the war of 1759, in what Francophone Québécois refer to as the “Conquest.” The English colonialists established themselves as the dominant power and English became the primary language of trade. The First Nations were largely marginalized throughout subsequent Quebec history, and Montreal became the focal point for conflicts over two European languages: French and English. The two busiest bridges in Montreal were named after the French explorers Cartier and Champlain, and most Montrealers would be hard pressed to come up with anything that was named after the First Nations.

## TWO SOLITUDES

*As a kid, I attended a French school for grades one and two in Outremont, an almost exclusively Francophone neighborhood. We moved to an Anglophone district named Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (NDG), and I attended English language schools after that. I had separate sets of friends, and they never mixed. Perhaps the only thing my friends had in common was that they played hockey after school in publicly subsidized neighborhood ice rinks that were often de facto segregated by language. And my friends watched the Montreal Canadiens’ hockey games on TV: in French for the Francophones, English for the Anglophones.*

Writing in 1945, Hugh MacLennan famously declared that Anglophones and Francophones in Montreal were “two solitudes” that had decided “the best way to coexist was to ignore the existence of one another.”<sup>2</sup> The city has been historically divided between the Anglophone west and the Francophone east for well over two centuries: a declaration in 1792 stipulated that the city would be divided into two districts, with St. Lawrence Boulevard as the line of demarcation, and still today the east-west split largely divides along linguistic

lines. One feature of city life is that its denizens often define themselves against other cities, and here too there has been a historic division, with Quebec City as the main historic rival for Montreal's Francophones<sup>3</sup> and Toronto for the Anglophones.

At first, the linguistic division was not so politically explosive. When Montreal was conquered by the British in 1760, it was a fur-trading settlement of several thousand French colonialists. The British army was followed by British merchants, who went on to control two-thirds of the fur trade by 1820. The names of those merchants—McGill, Molson, Redpath, and McTavish—still adorn streets signs and key institutions in the western part of Montreal.<sup>4</sup>

Powered by its economy, Montreal became a magnet for English-speaking immigrants from the British Isles in the early nineteenth century, and by 1855 more than half of the city's residents were of British origin. In the 1860s, however, the city's linguistic composition shifted for good and Montreal became a French city in demographic terms. Montreal's industrial economy drew thousands of Francophones from the impoverished countryside, and the population of the city reached one million by 1931, more than 60 percent of which was Francophone.

But the Anglophones continued to dominate the economy. In 1900, the English-speaking residents of the wealthy neighborhood known as Westmount were estimated to control 70 percent of all *Canadian* wealth: in the words of the humorist Stephen Leacock, they "enjoyed a prestige in that era that not even the rich deserved."<sup>5</sup> In 1961, the concentration of Anglophones in the city's best jobs helped produce a 51 percent wage gap between French- and English-speaking Montrealers. Through 1970, nearly 80 percent of predominantly Anglophone census tracts on Montreal Island—all located on the western part of the island—had annual family incomes higher than the metropolitan median. Anybody who wanted to succeed economically above the middle-management level in the private sector had to speak English, which put Francophones at a considerable disadvantage.

Of course, not all Anglophones were wealthy. In the 1840s, Irish immigrants fleeing the Potato Famine were located in poor neighborhoods and arguably were worse off than poor Francophones, who had the protection of the Catholic Church. Nor were the Anglophones always unified among themselves prior to the language wars of the 1960s: for example, British Protestants openly discriminated against Jews in educational policy. But English was considered the language of upward mobility, and that's what the new immigrants learned. Although Montreal was predominantly French demographically, its linguistic character, as Marc Levine puts it, "was undeniably English. Montreal was the urban center of English Canada where corporate boardrooms functioned in English, the best neighborhoods were inhabited by English-speakers, downtown was festooned with bill-



boards and commercial signs in English, and where the language of the city's minority—English—exerted a greater assimilationist pull than the language of the majority.<sup>76</sup> Prior to the 1960s, bilingualism was largely one-way, with ambitious Francophones learning English and working in an English environment, even if it meant cultural alienation. For their part, Anglophone Montrealers could live and work in English just as in any other city in Canada or the United States. In one telling statistic from 1961, unilingual Anglophones had a higher average income than bilingual and unilingual Francophones, and virtually the same average income as bilingual Anglophones.

It's worth asking why Francophones largely tolerated such arrangements prior to what became known as the "Quiet Revolution" in the 1960s. One reason is that the British rulers rapidly learned the virtues of noninterference. When the British conquered Montreal in 1760, they implemented an aggressive policy of assimilation, including outlawing Catholicism, the religion of Canadiens, and barred Catholics—that is, Canadiens—from holding colonial office. But British policy soon became more accommodationist and culturally tolerant out of fear that French Canada might become a fourteenth rebellious colony. In the 1770s, the British worked out accommodations with the French seigneurial and clerical elite and French was used as the language of public administration. Two centuries later, Quebec nationalists would worry that the assimilationist pressures of living next to the United States would turn Quebec into another Louisiana, where French language and culture survive merely as folklore and charm to attract tourists, but it is one of the ironies of history that the American Revolution may have had the effect of saving French culture and language in Quebec.

After the Conquest, the British rarely interfered with French language, religion, and schooling. In 1837, Louis-Joseph Papineau (a major street is named after him in east Montreal) led an uprising in Montreal demanding more responsible government from the unelected British rulers. The rebels were crushed and Lord Durham, a known reformer, was appointed governor general to investigate colonial grievances. Although the rebellion had more to do with the unfairness of colonial government than language and culture, Durham described the problems in Lower Canada as "two nations warring in the bosom of a single state."<sup>77</sup> His report (in)famously condemned Canadiens as a "people with no literature and no history" and urged assimilation into "English habits."<sup>78</sup> Almost in response to Lord Durham's harsh verdict, the next few years were characterized by a flowering of distinctively Canadian literature and accounts of history.<sup>79</sup> The project of assimilation was abandoned for good in 1867, when the Canadian Confederation (regarded as the founding of Canada) gave official political and legal status to the French language.

But joy over the "French parliament" in Quebec was short lived as it became

clear that the French language was not equal in practice. The language of business and work was still English, bilingualism meant assimilation into English language and culture, and about nine hundred thousand Canadiens left Quebec to try their chances in the United States.<sup>10</sup> So why didn't Francophones in Quebec use the democratic power of the ballot box to push for equal economic opportunities in their own language? Since the 1840s, the political leaders of Canadiens had veto power over policy issues affecting community interests, and after Confederation Francophones ran the provincial political system, but they didn't use the state to equalize economic opportunities for their linguistic community until the 1960s. An important reason is that Francophone religious leaders clung to a vision of a homogenous and isolated community blessed by God with superior nonmaterialistic values. In his work *Histoire du Canada français depuis la Découverte* [*History of French Canada since the Discovery*], the influential theologian/historian Lionel Groulx wrote that what France left in America at the moment of the Conquest was "a population of white peoples, French; nothing like elsewhere in America, of mixed population, half-indigenous. . . . [O]nly one type of colony was then possible: a colony of a white race. . . . The rare pleasure of our small Canadiens people, in its crib, was to receive from the Church, regarding God, man, its origin and its destiny, right, justice, and liberty, the highest metaphysic ever attained by the human genius, itself elevated by real faith."<sup>11</sup> Marcel Trudel notes that Canadiens "were inculcated with exalted theses that placed them ahead of other nations: you were chosen, it was repeated to them, to spread the civilization of Christ; different than your neighbors, you are animated with spirituality and not the passion for material goods; you form a human group without mixture, you are a white population, the family in your home is what's most beautiful in the world; a highly moral society, you respected others' rights and you accomplished extraordinary deeds."<sup>12</sup> With that sort of education, no wonder Francophone Montrealers didn't fight too hard for language rights aimed at equalizing economic opportunities. But that all changed when God died in Quebec shortly after Groulx published his book in 1960.<sup>13</sup> In the minds of most Francophones, He—God—was replaced by an ideal of a nation where Québécois could be *maîtres chez nous* (masters in our own house), where they could live as economic equals secure in their own language and culture. But they had to take on the English-speaking economic elites in Montreal to realize that dream.

#### THE RECONQUEST OF MONTREAL

*My mother, a Francophone Catholic, married my father, an Anglophone Jew, in 1962. At the time, it was a radical break with tradition. My parents fought over religion when I was a baby, and I was both circumcised and baptized. But they*

*eventually decided not to promote any religious values in order to avoid conflict—a kind of Rawlsian “overlapping consensus” within the family—and the rest of my upbringing was religion free (other than the occasional prayer with my kind and devout Catholic grandmother, who recently passed away at the age of 101). My sister and I learned two languages—French from our mother and English from our father—before we had to make any conscious effort to learn languages. My mother became politicized and strongly identified with the proindependence forces. My father wrote an article titled “So I Married a Separatist” for a leading Canadian magazine in the late 1960s, at the height of violent conflicts over language in Montreal. My parents separated shortly thereafter, and my sister and I lived with our mother, though we saw our father every Sunday.*

In the 1960s, the city’s linguistic climate changed quickly and language became politicized as never before. The upheaval began with what became known as Quebec’s Quiet Revolution: a Montreal-centered challenge by an emergent Francophone “new middle class” to the conservative, agrarian, and religious-based nationalism of the old elites. The challenge to the old Francophone elites was relatively “quiet”; primarily, Canadiens left the farms and towns of rural Quebec for Montreal, and stopped going to church and having many babies. But the challenge to the English-speaking elites was less “quiet.” As Marc Levine puts it, “this ‘Montrealization’ of French Quebec had made the traditional Canadian ideology, in which cultural survival was predicated on the rural isolation of French Catholics and in which Montreal’s English character remained unchallenged, an anachronism. Montreal, not rural Quebec, was now the center of Canadian culture and the place where the future of French in North America would be determined. In this urban setting, English-language influences were infinitely stronger than in the homogenously Francophone parishes of rural Quebec; thus, the continued survival and *épanouissement* [flowering] of the French language and culture would seem to require confronting the status of the English in Montreal.”<sup>14</sup>

*My mother told me a story about going downtown to shop at Eaton’s and being addressed in English. When my mother spoke French, she was made to feel inferior, even though she was bilingual and the salesperson was a unilingual Anglophone. Still today, she prefers shopping at a neighboring department store (the Bay) that sells more or less the same things. (Not coincidentally, perhaps, Eaton’s has since gone bankrupt.)*

With few opportunities in the Anglo-dominated private sector, the secular and upward-striving Francophone class dramatically expanded the role of the

provincial government in Quebec. Throughout the 1960s, the Quebec state expanded its functions and replaced the Catholic Church as the most visible presence in provincial life. The provincial government took over from the Church control of social and health-care services, an expanded bureaucracy provided job opportunities for Francophones, and public education was dramatically expanded, including a nine-campus Université du Québec system. The Quebec state also took steps to improve Francophone control of the Quebec economy by setting up an investment fund, a state-run steel mill, and a holding company. The most contentious and linguistically charged action of the provincial government during the Quiet Revolution was the “nationalization” of Hydro-Quebec in 1962–63. It was led by the then-minister of natural resources René Lévesque, who candidly presented the Hydro-Quebec plan as a step toward ending the subordinate status of Francophones in the Quebec economy; he was fiercely opposed by the Anglophone economic elites.

But it would be a mistake to view the affirmation of the French language in the 1960s as solely a reflection of its material advantages for the rising Francophone middle classes. Montreal in the 1960s was modernizing rapidly, not unlike Chinese cities such as Beijing in the 1990s. For the Anglophone community, Montreal seemed to be on the verge of becoming a truly world-class city. In 1965, the former deputy minister of education in Quebec W. P. Percival could introduce his book on Montreal with the words, “Montreal is in the most vigorous and progressive period of its growth. It is probably not an overstatement that no Canadian city is its equal in this respect.”<sup>15</sup> Ironically, those words were written at the same time Montreal was being overtaken by Toronto as Canada’s city of commerce. But such trends were not obvious to Anglophones at the time. Montreal’s population was growing rapidly (city planners envisioned a city of seven million by 2000,<sup>16</sup> but its population never went higher than four million), the city was building the world’s most modern subway,<sup>17</sup> it became one of the world’s leading centers of the architectural avant-garde<sup>18</sup> (similar to Beijing in the early 2000s), and it was chosen to host the international exposition (Expo) in 1967 and the Olympics in 1976 (which became the most costly debacle in Olympic history).<sup>19</sup>

But for the Francophones, as for many urban Chinese today, modernization also had a downside: their traditional value system seemed to have collapsed and modernization led to a kind of atomism and psychological anxiety. There was more competition for different kinds of social status and people seemed to become more instrumental and materialistic. Hence, pride in language came to the psychological rescue, so to speak. Language was viewed by Francophones as a sign of continuity, a repository of their own history that was being undermined by rapid social change. As recalled by Fernand Dumont in his retrospective on

the change of identities affecting Quebec during the Quiet Revolution, “the past was revived, in the 1960s, by another way that had little to do with the more or less abstract discussions about nationalism. Is language not the most concrete part of our heritage?”<sup>20</sup> Just as Confucianism has recently been revived among Chinese people seeking roots in a period of rapid social change, so language became the psychological ballast that provided a sense of continuity among Quebec Francophones in the 1960s.

So the growth of the Quebec state was accompanied by a language-based nationalist movement that campaigned for a separate state, led by René Lévesque, who would quit the Liberal Party and take the Parti Québécois to victory in the provincial elections of 1976. Without an independent state, it was felt, Francophones could not overcome a history of economic marginalization and protect their language from assimilation in a “sea of English.” In the 1960s, however, the violent wing of the proindependence forces was more dominant in the eyes of the public. Terrorists of the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) planted bombs in Montreal mailboxes and addressed a notice to the population of the state of Quebec calling for independence or death. From 1963 to 1970, every ten days, on average, a bomb was planted in Quebec province.<sup>21</sup> The violence culminated in the October Crisis of 1970. The FLQ kidnapped and murdered the Quebec labor minister Pierre Laporte and was holding the British trade commissioner James Cross. The Canadian prime minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau retaliated by invoking the War Measures Act and sending military troops into Montreal, something Montrealers hadn’t seen since the failed rebellion of 1837. Civil liberties were suspended and hundreds of suspected FLQ “sympathizers” were rounded up. Trudeau is widely considered to have overreacted, but the crisis was resolved peacefully and the rise of the Parti Québécois (PQ) would provide a nonviolent democratic outlet for growing language-based nationalist sentiment.

*As a ten-year-old boy, I recall riding in a car with my Anglophone grandfather. Seeing a banner that read, “DOWN WITH BILL 22!” I asked him, “What’s Bill 22?” His faced turned red and he told me that it was something bad, without telling me why.*

The next major conflict over language occurred in 1974, when the Quebec premier Robert Bourassa drafted a language bill known as Bill 22. Beginning in the mid-1960s, projects of the provincial, municipal, and federal governments began channeling activity eastward to traditionally French-speaking areas. Most conspicuously, the 1976 Olympics were to be hosted on the far east side of Montreal. But the aspirations of Francophones for collective self-expression of “nor-

mal” majority prerogatives were not fulfilled. So Bourassa proposed Bill 22, which aimed to quiet language-based nationalism by passing a language law that declared French the province’s (and thus Montreal’s) only official language. But the Francophones were upset that the bill contained no concrete provisions for implementation, and the Anglophones were even more outraged by the abrogation of free access to English-language schools and the fact that English was being denied its historical place in Montreal and Quebec society. Anglophone voters punished Bourassa by voting for smaller parties in the 1976 provincial election, but their comfort was short lived as the stunning victor in the 1976 elections was none other than the proindependence PQ. The dream of independence has not been realized (as of 2011), but the PQ would go on to implement language policies “that actually made some Anglophones look back with nostalgia at the policies of Bill 22.”<sup>22</sup>

*My mother was elated at the victory of the PQ. So was I. At school, I was being taught history by an elderly Anglophone teacher who taught the subject as a succession of British military victories over the French.<sup>23</sup> I felt sorry for the French and was secretly cheering for them.*

The PQ immediately went to work to redress economic inequalities. In 1977, it promulgated Bill 101, a language bill that was instrumental in improving the economic prospects of Francophone Montrealers. The language of work was henceforth to be French not just in government but also in key sectors of the private economy. All large companies of more than fifty workers were subject to “Francization” programs, which had the effect of increasing the demand for Francophones in the high-wage occupations of the private sector. Within a generation or so, a deliberate state-managed strategy succeeded in sharply narrowing the economic gap between Anglophones and Francophones.<sup>24</sup>

But it wasn’t just about economic power. Even if the language policy harmed Quebec’s economy, the Francophone majority was willing to pay an economic price, perhaps in line with traditional Canadian values that prioritized “spiritual” over material interests. Camille Laurin, a psychiatrist-turned-PQ minister of state for cultural development, was entrusted with the task of developing a language policy, and he explicitly defended the language policy in psychological terms, as “a *projet de société* that would codify the Francophone reassertion of collective self-esteem launched during the Quiet Revolution.”<sup>25</sup> A white paper on language policy unveiled by the PQ in 1977 argued that “Francophone demands have nothing to do with ‘English translations’ that policies of bilingualism will guarantee. It is a matter of protecting and developing, in its fullness, an original culture: a mode of being, of thinking, of writing, of creating, of social-

izing, of establishing relations between groups and individuals and even the conduct of business.”<sup>26</sup>

*As part of the French language laws, all stop signs were changed to “Arrêt.” In the late 1970s, the “Arrêt” was crossed out on a sign on my street and “Stop” was spray painted over it, presumably the work of an Anglophone nationalist. Several years later, I learned that “Stop” is used in France.*

Most famously, Bill 101 mandated that public and commercial signs would be in French only in order to give Montreal a *visage français* (French face) appropriate to a French city. The provincial premier René Lévesque explicitly laid out the logic that the public face of a city affects the values of its inhabitants: “In its own way, each bilingual sign says to an immigrant: ‘There are two languages here, English and French; you can choose the one you want.’ It says to the Anglophone: ‘No need to learn French; everything is translated.’ This is not the message we want to convey. It seems vital that all take notice of the French character of our city.”<sup>27</sup> The signs perplexed American tourists from south of the border, and perhaps negatively affected the tourist trade, but language policy was not just about economics.

Bill 101 also reduced the freedom of choice for the language of instruction. English-language schools would henceforth be limited to kids with at least one Anglophone parent with historical roots in Quebec. Immigrants were to send their children to French schools, as would the French community. Why would Francophone parents favor a policy that forces them to send their own children to French schools, in effect depriving their children of the economic opportunities offered by an English-language education? In materialist Hong Kong (see the chapter on Hong Kong), the English-language schools generally pave the way for better jobs and few, if any, parents refuse the opportunity to send their children there. Again, the reason is that language policy in Quebec was also about the assertion of a language-based communal identity that was felt to be under threat (in Hong Kong, the Cantonese language is less threatened because 97 percent of people in Hong Kong speak Cantonese, and the neighboring province is Guangdong, where most people speak Cantonese). Economic interests matter, especially given the unfair economic advantages of the Anglophone community, but they can be subordinated to “spiritual” matters in cases of conflict. And there is also a certain logic to the Francophone view. If all Francophones have the choice of sending their kids to English-language schools, then all may take it for fear of limiting the economic opportunities of their children. Imagine an ambitious middle-class Francophone parent in Montreal: she may

prefer sending her child to a French school, but if her neighbor sends her child to an English school, her own kid will lose out and thus she will also send her kid to an English school, even at the price of collective linguistic suicide, so to speak. But if the English schooling option is closed to all members of her community, then she can safely send her kid to a French school without fear of harming her child's job prospects (in Quebec).

*My Anglophone aunt and her family packed their bags and moved to Toronto. I'm still close to them and I see them every time I visit Toronto, but they seem to have lost their attachment to Montreal, other than the occasional craving for Montreal-style bagels and smoked meat. Their grandchildren, born and bred in Toronto, cheer for the Toronto Maple Leafs rather than the Montreal Canadiens hockey team.*

Not surprisingly, there was a strong Anglophone response to the new government and its language policy. Shortly after the PQ victory, the powerful Anglophone capitalist Charles Bronfman said, "Make no mistake, those bastards are out to kill us."<sup>28</sup> From 1976 to 1986, the Anglophone community in metropolitan Montreal declined by ninety-nine thousand people (one-sixth of the Anglophone population). Several prominent companies such as Sun Life moved their headquarters to Toronto, confirming the city's status as Canada's commercial and financial center. Yes, Anglophone flight had started earlier,<sup>29</sup> and perhaps new opportunities for Francophones helped to balance the loss of jobs in the Anglophone sector, but few would deny that the PQ victory did have an economic cost. But again, it wasn't just about the economy. For Francophones, it was mainly about using the state to secure an environment where they could express their language and culture without fear of being swamped in a sea of English, as happened to Louisiana.

Nor was it just about the economy for Anglophones: it seemed that the world they knew was coming to an end. The writer Mordecai Richler best expressed the Anglophone angst at the time: "The young, having set themselves up in Toronto or the West, will be coming back only for funerals. English-speaking Quebecers will continue to quit the province. The most ambitious of the new immigrants will naturally want their children educated in the North American mainstream (that is to say, in English), so they will settle elsewhere in Canada. Montreal, once the most sophisticated and enjoyable city in the country, a charming place, was dying, its mood querulous, its future decidedly more provincial than cosmopolitan."<sup>30</sup> But Richler was too pessimistic. A more tolerant and multicultural city would emerge from the wreckage of the language wars. Not a world power, perhaps, but a morally improved and even more charming postcolonial city.



## TOWARD MULTICULTURALISM?

*My Anglophone grandmother taught me a Yiddish song as we washed dishes together after her delicious meals. To this day, I can still sing it, though I don't understand what any of the words mean. I know only one other Yiddish word—schmuck—which my father taught me to say when I was two years old in order to shock his mother.*

Montreal, like other North American cities, has attracted many different kinds of immigrants over the course of its history. Large numbers of Jews, fleeing dangerous conditions in Europe and Russia, settled in Montreal, and Yiddish became the third most important language in the city.<sup>31</sup> In 1931, there were some sixty thousand Yiddish speakers in Montreal, and the community functioned with a considerable degree of independence from the mainstream Anglophone and Francophone communities. For a while, Yiddish became the basis for a flourishing literary and community life, and Montreal became known as “Jerusalem of the North.”<sup>32</sup> But most Yiddish speakers did not pass the language on to their children and today the language has pretty much died out in Montreal.

Why hasn't the “death” of Yiddish in Montreal become an occasion for social conflict in the city? The main reason is that Jews typically regarded themselves as immigrants seeking integration, and the loss of Yiddish was not viewed as a cause for social protest. More generally, as Will Kymlicka argues, immigrants typically wish to integrate into the larger society and to be accepted as full members of it. Their aim is not to become a separate or self-governing nation alongside the larger society; at most they seek to modify the institutions and laws of the mainstream society to make them more accommodating of cultural differences, like Sikh motorcyclists campaigning for the right to wear turbans. Such groups differ from long-established, self-governing, and territorially established “national minorities” such as Francophones in Canada. National minorities typically wish to maintain themselves as distinct societies and they demand various forms of political autonomy, if not complete independence, to ensure their survival as distinct societies.<sup>33</sup>

*As a kid in the 1970s, I lived in an ethnically diverse neighborhood called NDG and many of my friends were descendants of recent immigrants. I played street hockey with my friends Angelo and Frankie, who spoke Italian at home (I recall one occasion when a friend was called home for dinner in the midst of an exciting game, and after his mother closed the door he proceeded to swear at her in Italian, to the general amusement of all; to this day, I can recall a few swear words in Italian). But we all spoke in English on the street and my friends went to Anglophone schools.*

What did lead to social conflict was the language of instruction for immigrants to Montreal. Until the mid-1970s, almost all immigrants sent their children to Anglophone schools for the understandable reason that it increased their economic opportunities.<sup>34</sup> But it is equally understandable that such practices led to resentment on the part of Francophone Montrealers who wanted to equalize economic prospects for members of their linguistic community.

*On the Francophone side of my family, my grandfather was one of eleven children in his family, and my grandmother one of nine. My grandmother had seven children. My mother had two. I have one.*

Moreover, the birth rates of Francophones plunged in the 1960s and 1970s, leading to dire predictions that Francophones would eventually become a minority in Montreal and perhaps become extinct as a community in North America.<sup>35</sup> So when the PQ was elected in 1976, one of its key policies was to force new immigrants to attend French school. Bill 101 effectively curtailed access to English-language schools for immigrants and ended any threat of Francophone *minorisation* in Montreal public schools. Between 1976 and 1987, the number of schoolchildren in Montreal receiving instruction in English-language schools fell by 53 percent. And well over one-third of those pupils were enrolled in French immersion programs. As Levine puts it, “Bill 101 accomplished the Francophone nationalist goal of turning English-language education in Montreal into a ‘privilege’ for a narrowly defined community of Anglophones, not a system that integrated immigrants and threatened the Anglicization of Montreal.”<sup>36</sup> Although Bill 101 may seem unjust to Anglophones and allophones (those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English)—and still is often seen as such by members of those communities—Levine goes on to note that Quebec schools were replicating the function of schools in the rest of North America: “The most radical impact of Bill 101 on Montreal’s French-language schools has been to introduce a function that urban schools throughout the United States and English Canada have performed since the mid-nineteenth century: integrating newcomers into the language and culture of the city’s majority.”<sup>37</sup>

At first, the idea was to assimilate the immigrants into Quebec Francophone culture as though the cultures and languages of the immigrants would simply disappear into an American-style “melting pot.” The PQ concept of Quebec culture in 1978 was rooted in the French-Québécois heritage without allowing for the possibility that the heritage could be enriched by the contributions of more recent immigrants. Such ethnic, if not race-based, ideas of nationhood persisted until 1995, when the PQ leader Jacques Parizeau blamed “money and the ethnic vote” for the defeat of the second Quebec referendum on independence.<sup>38</sup>

*A few years after the divorce, my mother met Anthony Meech, a British man who had lived in Montreal since the 1950s without ever having changed his nationality. A proud Brit, Anthony is visibly moved when he watches the Queen's annual New Year's address. Thirty years later, my mother and Anthony are still in love, living in a retirement home in Westmount, formerly the bastion of English rule. My mother now votes for the Green party. Anthony treated my sister and me as his own children and was a rock of stability in turbulent times. For several years, my father lived with Sonja, a woman of Austrian heritage, and her children, Lance and Sandi, are like siblings to my sister and me. After Sonja and my father broke up, my father married Odile Jules-Perret, a Frenchwoman. Odile and my father eventually moved to Paris and I visited them several times, especially during my graduate studies in the United Kingdom. They were married for ten years before my father succumbed to lung disease. I still go to Paris to see Odile and her son, Ugo, a kind of half brother to me (see the chapter on Paris). Meanwhile, my sister, Valérie, married a Rastafarian in Jamaica, Alfonso, who recently succumbed to a heart attack in Montreal. Valérie cared for our father during the last three years of his life and now works as an electrician, one of the few females in an all-Francophone work environment. Her son, Oliver, now twenty-two years old, towers over me, and I no longer dare play basketball with him. While I was studying in the United Kingdom, I met Song Bing, a graduate student from China, and we married shortly thereafter. My wife learned French and I learned Chinese. We have one child, Julien Song Bell. I still love Montreal but now live in Beijing and return "home" once a year.*

But "facts on the ground" eventually changed perceptions and ideals in the Francophone community. Throughout the mid-1970s, the clientele of French-language schools was composed almost exclusively of French Québécois, but by 1987 more than 25 percent were non-Francophone and more than 35 percent were not of French-Québécois ethnic origin. In 1981, the provincial Ministry of Immigration was renamed to include "cultural communities" in its mission, and the government outlined ways to preserve minority subcultures while integrating groups into Quebec public institutions.<sup>39</sup> The new multicultural outlooks have also enlarged Francophone Quebec's consciousness of its past and present, with more translations of the literary contributions of other cultural communities into French. As Sherry Simon puts it, "Translation is possible now because French no longer has to compete with other histories on its own territory; it can absorb them. French in Montreal has become a 'language of translation,' no longer only in the sense of a language obliged to translate, but one that has ample enough room to contain other histories."<sup>40</sup> This more open cultural disposition is perhaps best symbolized by the decision of Quebec's best-loved Francophone playwright, Michel Tremblay, to allow his play *Les Belles-Sœurs* to be translated

into Yiddish and performed in 1992 (previously, he had forbidden a production in Montreal in a language other than French).<sup>41</sup> The law banning the use of languages other than French on public signs was revised in 1997 to allow for second languages (so long as French is more prominent), and such openness no longer generates much public debate, reflecting the Francophone community's increased confidence.

Although many Anglophones left after the PQ victory, the large majority did stay behind. The "leftovers" made serious efforts to learn French because French became more important for economic mobility. The French "face" of Montreal also meant that Anglophones had to learn French to navigate in the new environment. Such forced change may have been unwelcome at first, but now Anglophones typically accept the necessity of learning French, and many regard it as a plus.

Today there are still some tensions, but relations between the Francophone and Anglophone communities have never been as relaxed or natural. It is not uncommon for an Anglophone to be speaking in French to a Francophone, with the Francophone reciprocating by speaking in English, both sides making an effort to accommodate each other. The main reason for the improvement of social relations is the exceptionally rapid bilingualization of the Anglophone community, especially among the young.<sup>42</sup> Today, 62 percent of Anglophones are bilingual, compared to only 3 percent in 1956.<sup>43</sup> In the city as whole, 53 percent of the population is fluent in both French and English (by comparison, only 8.5 percent of the population in Toronto is French-English bilingual).<sup>44</sup> The spaces of "the once-divided, former colonial city"<sup>45</sup> have also opened up. Prior to the 1970s, Mount-Royal Park in the center of the city, designed in the 1880s by Frederick Olmsted (who also designed Central Park in New York), was the only space shared by Francophones and Anglophones.

*In 2009, I made two trips to Montreal. On the first, I was invited to a dinner in the Le Plateau area at the home of a former Canadian ambassador to China. The dinner guests seemed to switch at random between French and English. During the second trip, I joined my friend Annie Billington at a restaurant called Le Se Péché (The Fifth Sin), also in the Le Plateau area. Annie is perfectly bilingual and finally I asked her what motivates her switch from one language to another. She looked at me as if I had posed a silly question, saying she doesn't know. Most of the conversation was in French, but I noticed that she switched to English to express more bourgeois concerns about everyday life.*

Today, historically Anglophone neighborhoods like NDG have become magnets for educated Francophones, and politically progressive Anglophones

take pride in living in the Le Plateau neighborhood in the east part of the city.<sup>46</sup> The historic dividing line between east and west, St. Lawrence Boulevard, is one of the most multicultural neighborhoods in Montreal. Another linguistically and ethnically mixed district, ironically enough, is the Saint-Henri neighborhood, which is served by the metro station named after the racist theologian Lionel Groulx. In a sign of the times, Anglophones who still refer to “Dorchester Boulevard” in downtown Montreal rather than “Boulevard René Lévesque” (the street was renamed in 1989 in honor of the proindependence former premier of Quebec) are often viewed by young Anglophone Montrealers as politically out-of-touch reactionaries.

In short, the language wars have given way to relaxed attitudes.<sup>47</sup> Anglophones and allophones usually learn French because they want to, and Francophones have become more secure and thus more open. From a separatist perspective, the “reconquest of Montreal” has proven almost too successful: “Ironically, as René Lévesque and others speculated, the cultural security provided by Bill 101 may have taken some of the steam out of Francophone dissatisfaction with the Canadian Confederation and unwittingly undermined the PQ’s effort to secure a majority in support of Quebec independence.”<sup>48</sup>

*My nephew Oliver, who looks black, was fined by a white policeman a few years ago for “loitering” near a metro stop. My sister (who is white) went to court to fight the charges on the grounds that her son had been discriminated against on the basis of race.*

Of course, tensions remain. In the 1980s, “the socioeconomic profile of Montreal’s Haitian community looked disturbingly similar to that labeled ‘underclass’ in urban America.”<sup>49</sup> In August 2008, a riot took place in Montreal North after the shooting death of a black teen by Montreal police, stemming “from what young people say is racial profiling by police officers who are trying to crack down on street-gang activity.”<sup>50</sup> Editorials in the *Montreal Gazette* still raise occasional complaints about treatment of the Anglophone community,<sup>51</sup> though the Anglophone community has given up its futile effort to push for “rights” such as the freedom of choice in schooling and the freedom to choose the language of public signs. Arguably, there remains one “solitude” in Quebec, namely, the Francophones who keep to themselves and do not learn English (at the Francophone Université de Montréal, some freshmen are unable to read English; here in Beijing, my students all read English, and the same was true in Singapore and Hong Kong).<sup>52</sup> And the city may “look” less multicultural than cities such as Toronto and Vancouver (even though Montreal has a greater proportion of multilingual people),<sup>53</sup> if only because other Canadian cities receive

large groups of immigrants from China and South Asian countries who usually prefer to immigrate to English-speaking cities (and Quebec's immigration policy favors immigrants who speak French).

But overall, it's hard to argue with the verdict of the American writer Norman Mailer: "Montreal is a great city, a living example of how we can overcome the uniformity of global capitalism that is seeking to turn the world into one vast hotel system with McDonald's on the ground floor. If you grow up speaking two languages, you learn to perceive things in different ways and you resist conformity."<sup>54</sup> Today, Montreal is one of the most easygoing and tolerant cities in the world, famous for its bohemians<sup>55</sup> and playful outlook,<sup>56</sup> but without the social disorder and high crime rates that plague other open cities. Part of the city's identity involves being alive to difference, a consciousness of others that contributes to building a charming and multicultural whole that is greater than the sum of the parts (in contrast, Toronto often seems like a conglomeration of discrete neighborhoods, without much of a common thread or civic life). In other words, the sense of civicism has grown stronger and more inclusive in Montreal at least partly because Montrealers have become more sensitive to cultural difference. The broader political lesson seems clear: as Alan Patten puts it, "the best way to promote a common identity is sometimes to allow difference to flourish. It is in virtue of the fact that one's own group specificity is recognized and affirmed in the public sphere that one's attachment to the political community as a whole is strengthened and extended."<sup>57</sup> And maybe there are broader moral lessons too. Can it be that bilingualism founded on equality between language groups has led to moral improvement? Is it possible that moving between languages in unforced ways makes it easier to step outside the self and empathize with others? But maybe we shouldn't celebrate too early. A deep psychological trauma hit Montrealers of both language groups just as the city was improving from a moral point of view.

#### IT'S THE HOCKEY, HOSTIE [STUPID]<sup>58</sup>

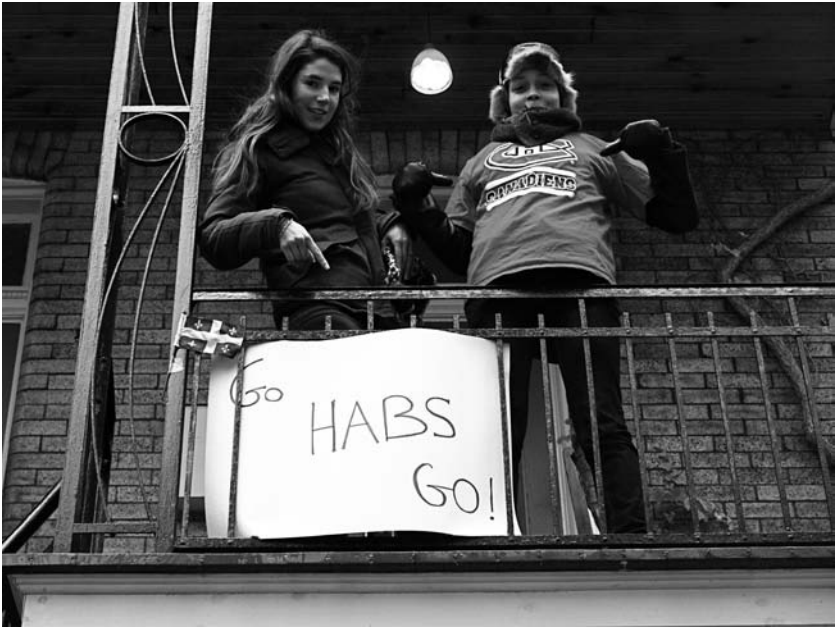
*As a kid, I thought the Montreal Canadiens were invincible. At a certain point, I even felt sorry for the other teams and secretly wished that the Canadiens would lose once in a while "for the good of the league." I'd like to think that such sentiments helped to motivate my concerns for global justice, but now I regret ever having harbored such secret thoughts: I may have cursed the team.*

The Canadiens are the greatest team in hockey history. From 1975 to 1979, powered by great Francophone forwards such as Guy Lafleur, Jacques Lemaire, and Yvan Cournoyer, they won four Stanley Cups in a row. Here in Beijing, I'm

pleased to note that an indoor hockey rink displays pictures of that immortal hockey team. I play hockey every Monday and Thursday nights and proudly wear my Montreal Canadiens shirt (oh, sorry, this section is supposed to be theoretical).

*In May 1993, I attended what turned out to be the last game of the semifinal play-off series against the New York Islanders. The Canadiens were leading 4 to 1 after two periods, and I went to the bathroom in a state of exhilaration but noticed that the young Montreal fan urinating next to me seemed a bit depressed. I asked him what was wrong and he said, “Les Canadiens, Coupe Stanley, pis après ça qu’est-ce qu’on fait?” (“The Canadiens, Stanley Cup, WTF do we do after that?”) The Canadiens went on to win a record-breaking twenty-fourth Stanley Cup that year, and some observers were perplexed that the win was followed by angry riots, with cars overturned and rocks thrown through shop windows. But I wasn’t surprised. My bathroom friend must have been there, expressing the most profound sense of existential angst that follows the realization that life can only go downhill from here. The Canadiens have not won the Stanley Cup since then.*

Perhaps the only unifying force in Montreal prior to the 1970s was shared passion for the Montreal Canadiens hockey team. To be more precise, the team unified male members of Anglophone and Francophone communities. New immigrants were largely indifferent, as were most women. The games were often watched in taverns that barred women from entry. But today, support for the team has broadened to include most, if not all, sectors of the population. As Mike Boone puts it, “Hockey is the secular religion here, a passion that transcends linguistic, ethnic, demographic, and socioeconomic lines to unite all Montrealers.”<sup>59</sup> The team itself has become much more international, which helps to explain support from immigrant groups (as a kid, my Italian-Canadian friend Angelo supported the Boston Bruins because they had a great player of Italian heritage, Phil Esposito; the young Angelos in today’s Montreal, I strongly suspect, are Canadiens’ fans). As the city has become more egalitarian in its gender relations, many women have come to support the team too (I was surprised recently to hear my sister refer to “our” team, something she never used to do). Another reason for increased female support is that many young women play hockey now. The 2008–9 season was the hundredth anniversary of the Canadiens team, and Canadiens flags were proudly displayed from cars, homes, and stores. A couple of decades ago, people displayed either Quebec flags (to support the Francophone nationalist cause) or Canadian flags (to express Anglophone support for Canadian federalism). Such political symbols are rarely seen now.



Two Montreal Canadiens fans with a Quebec flag—symbol of francophone aspirations—in the background. Photograph © Marie-Eve Reny.

*February 27, 2003. My father is in terrible pain, barely able to breathe—in what appears to be the end stage of a terrible lung illness that has gotten progressively worse over two decades. He asks for morphine to end the pain. I tell him he should fight on; there's still a lot to live for and he has an outside chance of recovery. He says that's wishful thinking. He asks about the Montreal Canadiens. I tell him they still have an outside chance to make the playoffs, but he says that's also wishful thinking.*

*March 1, 2003. The Montreal Gazette has an unusual editorial comparing the fate of the Montreal Canadiens fans to that of a terminally ill patient (even invoking Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's work), and arguing that it is time to resign ourselves to the fact that the Canadiens won't make the playoffs. I watch that night's game, against the vastly superior Vancouver Canucks, with my father. The Canadiens nearly pull it off in overtime; they miss very close chances with a power play at the end. The game ends in a tie, and I keep hoping beyond hope that the Canadiens will make the playoffs. And that my father will recover.*

*March 8, 2003. My father dies. Later that morning, I glance at the paper. The Canadiens lost 3–1 to the Mighty Ducks, dealing an apparent end to their playoff hopes. That night, I dream that my father and I are watching an exciting Cana-*



*diens–Red Wings game. The game is tied and, in the dying seconds, the Canadiens miss an open net. The Red Wings come right back and hit, not one, but two goal posts. Even the referee, strangely enough, sprawls in front of the Canadiens net to stop the Red Wings shots. I had planned on leaving because I was so busy, but I tell my father I will definitely stay to watch the overtime. I wake up at that point. I try to force myself back to sleep to watch the overtime, but without success.<sup>60</sup>*

Things looked good for the Canadiens in the 2008–9 season. At Christmas-time, I was back in Montreal and overjoyed that my friend Mike Sayig had procured tickets for a Canadiens game against the Florida Panthers (Mike was educated mostly in English schools but now watches the Canadiens' games on TV in French). The game was thrilling and the Canadiens won in overtime. They were on a hot streak; it was the first topic of conversation among Montrealers at the time, and our team was one of the favorites to win the Stanley Cup. We were all hoping for that perfect hundredth anniversary birthday gift.

The Canadiens are eliminated in four straight games in the first round of the playoffs. What happened to the once extraordinary Canadiens? Why are they so ordinary now? The main reason, I must confess, is that they no longer have an unfair advantage over other teams. Until 1969, the Canadiens had first dibs on Quebec's first two draft picks, but the practice was abandoned in the name of parity for expansion teams.<sup>61</sup> So the team I worshipped in the 1970s was composed of players who played for Montreal because the system was rigged in Montreal's favor. That's why so many great players from Quebec played for Montreal, but now they are spread out among other teams. So there was, it turns out, one advantage that benefited both Francophone and Anglophone Montrealers—the only one of its kind—but we lost that advantage to equalize opportunities for other teams.

*In May 2010, the Canadiens accomplish a miracle. They rally from behind to defeat the top-ranked Washington Capitals in the first round of the playoffs, and the second-ranked Pittsburgh Penguins in the second round. In the Journal de Montréal, the masterful Canadiens goalie Jaroslav Halak is depicted as Jesus Christ in a Canadiens jersey and goalie mask, surrounded by adoring apostles.<sup>62</sup> Unfortunately, I can't watch the games on TV here in Beijing. My son tells me he watched the last game on his computer in class. I scold him, telling him he should never do that again. Then I ask him for the website address. But it's not the same. I feel the call of home. I dream about sitting with my father in a Paris café, amazed that even Parisians are talking about the Montreal Canadiens. I look into plane tickets to fly back for the finals. But first the Canadiens must overcome the lowly Philadelphia Flyers in the semifinals. The Canadiens lose in five games, mainly because*

*they cannot withstand the attack of three fleet and skilled young Francophones on the Flyers team: the sort of players who would have been playing for the Canadiens in the past.*

Maybe, then, equality isn't the mother of all values. If I had the power to redo Montreal history, the pre-1969 hockey draft system is the one part I would not have tampered with. The National Hockey League might not be as equal, but the Canadiens would continue to win Stanley Cups. And my father might still be alive.

## THE CITY OF NATION BUILDING

*In 1991, I was offered my first teaching job, a post as lecturer in political theory at the National University of Singapore. I had just completed my doctoral thesis on communitarian theory and was doubly excited about going to Singapore because its government had recently put forward communitarianism, defined as “placing society above self,” as one of the country’s four core values that should be taught in schools, workplaces, and homes. I knew I wasn’t going to a liberal democracy—Singapore was basically a one-party state notorious for its constraints on privacy and free speech—but if its form of government meant rich and fulfilling communal attachments instead of the no-holds-barred individualism, rootlessness, alienation from the political process, and other phenomena stemming from the erosion of communal life in Western democracies, then it would be worth it. Perhaps the Singaporean model couldn’t be generalized, but it might be suitable for a “communitarian Canadian” newly married to a woman from mainland China. Three years later, however, I was packing my bags after being told by the acting head of the department that I didn’t “fit in.”*

Singapore is a small tropical island roughly the size of Brooklyn; its current population is nearly five million, including more than one million migrant workers. The island was originally an outpost of the Sumatran Srivijaya empire and had the Javanese name Temasek, or “sea town.”<sup>1</sup> Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, the island was part of the sultanate of Johor, though Portuguese and Dutch colonialists had control at different times. In 1819, the British empire builder Thomas Stamford Raffles colonized the island. Sir Raffles is known as the “founding father of Singapore”—his statue still stands at the spot where he first landed in Singapore, and the city’s oldest and most luxurious hotel is named after him. Sir Raffles was an idealist opponent of the slave trade and he aimed to remake the island into a land of virtue and prosperity, though subsequent history did not always go according to plan. Singapore became an important trading center, with tens of thousands of migrants from China, India, and the surrounding Malay-Islamic archipelago. By the early twentieth century, the

island was composed mainly of Chinese males who did not regard Singapore as home: "They came to make money and return home as quickly as possible."<sup>2</sup> The Chinese settlers organized themselves into triads (crime syndicates), prostitution was rampant (and legal), and up to 70 percent of Chinese workers were regular users of opium. As in Hong Kong, British colonialists profited handsomely from the trade in opium: from 1824 to 1910, the tax on opium was the government's single largest source of revenue.<sup>3</sup>

In World War II, the Japanese Imperial Army invaded Malaya, culminating in the Battle of Singapore. The British were defeated in six days and surrendered their supposedly impregnable fortress on February 15, 1942. The surrender was described by the British prime minister Winston Churchill as "the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history."<sup>4</sup> As in Hong Kong, the brutal Japanese occupation is generally portrayed as the worst period in Singapore's history,<sup>5</sup> but it also meant that the British lost their aura of invincibility.

The British returned to power following the war but eventually gave in to demands for self-government. In 1959, elections were held under a formula that granted Singapore control in all matters of government except foreign policy and defense<sup>6</sup> (similar to the "one-country, two systems" formula in Hong Kong since 1997). The People's Action Party (PAP), led by Lee Kuan Yew, won the election and declared full independence from Britain four years later. But the PAP leaders had doubts about the economic viability of a small, independent island without any natural resources and fought hard to join a federation with the surrounding territories so that Singapore could enjoy the benefits of a common market. Lee also used the opportunity to marginalize Chinese leftists in Singapore who preferred independence and still had moral legitimacy as a result of their courageous resistance against the Japanese during World War II. In 1963, Singapore, Malaya, Sarawak, and North Borneo formed a new federation—Malaysia. After two years, however, Singapore was expelled from Malaysia and forced to be independent (though Lee's chief lieutenant, Goh Keng Swee, had already developed a secret plan for independence).<sup>7</sup> The expulsion was partly due to ethnic differences—mutual distrust between the predominantly Chinese Singaporeans and their predominantly Muslim Malay neighbors. Disputes over economic policy and personality clashes between the leaders of Singapore and Malaya also played a role.

Lee famously wept in public when he announced the separation. Singapore did not have any difficulty in winning international acceptance of its independence, but the economic and security challenges lying ahead seemed insurmountable. Only a stable and united community could overcome these obstacles, and the PAP launched a massive nation-building exercise designed to forge a common identity that would motivate patriotic citizens to sacrifice on the

nation's behalf. Nation building, however, was perhaps Singapore's greatest challenge. As Lee puts it, "[We had] to build a nation from scratch."<sup>8</sup> Fortunately, Lee and his lieutenants did not lack confidence. Like other nation builders, they needed to inculcate certain values—myths, as critics might say—to unify the population (the political leaders of other cities in this book, needless to say, did not face such demands). As Dr. Goh, the former deputy prime minister, put it in Singapore's early days: "Without a widely accepted code of moral values, Singapore will remain what it is now—a community which is basically self-centred and selfish. . . . [W]hy do we want to turn out citizens of this kind, that is, with creative imagination, stout character, and a sound sense of moral values? I believe that without this kind of citizen, there is no guarantee that we can maintain a continuing basis for our survival and prosperity."<sup>9</sup>

So, which values did Singapore's leaders try to inculcate that would make Singaporeans into other-regarding citizens concerned with the fate of their new nation? The PAP is fond of acronyms, and one might label Singapore's key values the three Ms: material well-being, multiracialism, and meritocracy. The PAP—which has ruled Singapore continuously since its independence in 1965—has worked tirelessly to promote these values. The problem is that these same values (as interpreted and promoted by the PAP) have also led to an extreme form of individualism—a more individualistic form of life than I had encountered in any Western country—that undermines the goal of creating patriotic citizens willing to sacrifice for the common national good. It's when I realized the glaring gap between the communitarian rhetoric and the individualistic reality that I really turned against Singapore's social and political system: in this sense, the head of the department was correct to conclude that I didn't fit in. But I don't mean to be too negative. When I visited Singapore fifteen years after I left in 1994, I saw more grounds for hope as I ate, drank, and talked with my old friends. Let me proceed with an argument that the three Ms undermine nation building, and I will end on a more optimistic note.

#### THE VALUE OF MATERIAL WELL-BEING

*I had experience with odd jobs in the past: scything weeds on ski slopes, driving delivery trucks, serving food in cafeterias, sorting books in libraries. But I always knew those jobs were temporary, and the little money I made was used mainly for teenage hedonistic pursuits. My first full-time teaching job, at the National University of Singapore, paid surprisingly well for a new academic. About 40 percent of my salary was put in a forced savings plan called the Central Provident Fund, so I didn't have to worry about the long term; the government would look after my financial future, which was fine with me because I had no interest or expertise in managing funds.*

*University housing was subsidized, and there was plenty of money left over for fancy meals and traveling to seemingly exotic destinations like Malaysia and Vietnam. For the first time in my life, I did not have to worry about money. And my work was enjoyable: I was actually paid to read books and discuss political theory with friends and charming students only a few years younger than myself! Had I arrived in an ideal communist society free from material want, where people live to work rather than work to live, and where different kinds of people realize their creative essences in harmonious community?*

More than two thousand years ago, Mencius argued that the government must provide for the people's basic means of subsistence so they won't go morally astray: "Lacking dependable means of support, they will go astray and fall into excesses, stopping at nothing."<sup>10</sup> There is no point promoting moral behavior if people are worried about their next meal. Hence, the government's first priority is to secure the basic means of subsistence. Such views have been influential in Chinese history. Karl Marx arrived at a similar conclusion in the nineteenth century: without an "absolutely essential material premise, want is merely made general, and with want the struggle for necessities would begin again, and the old filthy business would necessarily be restored."<sup>11</sup> If communism is implemented without developing the productive forces that underpin material abundance, then it won't work for long.

Lee Kuan Yew and his key aides espoused socialism, at least in the early days. Yet they were also realists wary of utopian plans for social change and moral transformation. Hence, it should not be surprising that they felt the most urgent task after Singapore's unhappy beginnings was to promote economic development that would underpin material well-being for all, a necessary condition for cultivating a strong sense of commitment to the nation and other forms of other-regarding behavior. Once the basics are taken care of, then Singapore can become a nation that "demands passion of a higher order. It is passion for a country and a people, the desire to belong, to identify, to pay back in loyalty, in sacrifice, in life itself."<sup>12</sup>

In the early 1960s, few would have predicted Singapore's economic success. The 1960s, as Singapore's textbooks repeatedly emphasize, were characterized by violence and disorder: "the economic disaster following the British withdrawal of the military bases; the race riots between Chinese and Malays; Indonesian president Sukarno's *Konfrontasi* campaign to topple the newly formed Federation of Malaysia; the Chinese students' demonstration over conscription and other issues; and of course, the heart-wrenching disappointment of Singapore's expulsion from the Federation."<sup>13</sup> Yet Singapore succeeded, as Lee titled his memoirs, in moving "From Third World to First." In two decades, Singapore

was transformed from a seedy Asian port to a gleaming metropolis and major manufacturing center that delivers employment and high-quality housing, health care, and education to its people.<sup>14</sup>

*My wife, Song Bing, obtained a job writing reports on Chinese legal reform for the Singaporean cabinet shortly after we arrived in Singapore. She worked for a think tank then called the Institute for East Asian Political Economy, headed by Goh Keng Swee. We were flattered when Dr. Goh invited us to dinner on several occasions. He commanded respect: he was truly brilliant as well as charming in conversation. He floated creative ideas for improving Singapore that sometimes verged on the eccentric, if only to see what his dinner companions would make of them. Dr. Goh went to China on several occasions in the late 1980s and early 1990s and saw the potential for development there before it had registered elsewhere. He was a good listener, though he stuck to his guns once he made up his mind. Once, he proposed alterations to his office. An interior designer raised some objections, but Dr. Goh impatiently said, "That's the conclusion." The office was redone in accordance with Dr. Goh's specifications.*

Dr. Goh is widely regarded as the architect of Singapore's economic miracle.<sup>15</sup> He had already formulated the main lines of Singapore's economic strategy before the 1959 election, when he was appointed minister of finance. Dr. Goh set up the Economic Development Board (EDB), which aimed to facilitate financially sound projects by investors, both local and foreign, who were putting up factories in Singapore.

*Shortly after we arrived in Singapore, we were offered a subsidized flat in Jurong West. The housing officer at the university told us that it was a hip and multicultural district. But it was not an ideal location for young urbanites. We were surrounded by public housing blocs and factories and it was an hour-long commute to the university. After one year, we were allowed to move closer to the university because I had repeated eye infections that a doctor could plausibly attribute to pollution.*

The most famous early EDB project was a plan to turn vast tracts of empty wasteland into an industrial zone in Jurong. The EDB spent large sums on building the infrastructure long before it had any clients to occupy it.<sup>16</sup> At the time, critics referred to the project as "Goh's Folly," but it was eventually acclaimed as providing the foundations for farsighted economic development.

Dr. Goh also pushed for an investment policy that relied on manufacturing for export rather than import substitution. The idea was to use the EDB to

search for entrepreneurs outside Singapore who would be willing to locate manufacturing facilities in, and export components from, Singapore. At the time, the strategy of opening the country to foreign investment was innovative. As Lee explains in typically blunt language: “Of course, the prevailing theory was that multinationals were exploiters of cheap labor and cheap raw materials and would suck [us] dry. We had no raw materials for them to exploit. All we had was labor. Nobody else wanted to exploit labor. So why not, if they want to exploit our labor? They’re welcome to it. And we found out that whether or not they exploited us, we were learning how to do a job from them, which we would never have learnt.”<sup>17</sup>

*September 2009. I meet my old friend Chua Beng Huat, now head of the Department of Sociology at the National University of Singapore. He picks me up in a fancy sports car, but we go to a working-class hawker center for a lunch of local delicacies. It’s hot and humid but quite comfortable in the shade, and we talk for several hours while nursing cold beers. I realize that the “strolling” methodology may not be applicable in Singapore: nobody walks for enjoyment in this tropical climate. The hawker center is the center of social life: it’s where friends meet and minds are set free to share stories and political gossip.<sup>18</sup> Beng Huat explains that several historically contingent factors in the 1960s explain why Singapore did not develop into a liberal state. The cold war, the Vietnam War, the massacre of Chinese in Indonesia, and race riots in Singapore all played into the hands of a political elite that could rely on thuggish measures to crush alternative sources of power. Yet I wonder, was it really necessary? Hong Kong also faced huge challenges in the 1960s, such as violent extremists setting off bombs during the Cultural Revolution, yet the government did not embark on the road to repression and it still managed to develop economically. Perhaps a key explanation for the different political outcomes lies in the different economic models, as any good Marxist would say.*

Multinational companies will exploit labor only if they are promised a stable and secure investment climate, particularly if they are asked to invest in a remote and inhospitable small city-state. In the early 1960s, however, the left-wing political movements and independent labor organizations in Singapore were strong players that did not necessarily welcome the opportunity to be exploited. Moreover, the PAP wanted more control over labor so that it could engage in long-term development planning. For example, it required every employee to put 35 percent of wages into the Central Provident Fund (employers were required to invest an amount equal to 5 percent of the worker’s wages in the CPF), which gave the government a considerable cash reserve necessary for urban redevelopment, public housing, and the upgrading of infrastructure.<sup>19</sup>



*In 1991, my colleague and friend Chee Soon Juan, a young lecturer in neuropsychology, decided to join the opposition. Lee had stepped down as prime minister (though he still exercised influence as senior minister in the cabinet), and there was talk of democracy and civil society by young ministers such as George Yeo—in retrospect, cynics call this period the Prague Spring of Singapore. Dr. Chee drew huge crowds wherever he went, and no doubt the government was getting worried. He gave a talk to a packed house at my university and clearly outdebated the PAP MP Davinder Singh (who would go on to fight Soon Juan in the courts). Shortly thereafter, Dr. Chee was sacked from the university by his head of department, a PAP MP, allegedly for misusing a research grant. Most of my colleagues were outraged but we were too fearful to do anything; it was a depressing time. A few months later, I stumbled upon a beautifully written book titled *The Mendicant Professor* by D. J. Enright. The author describes his experience of being subject to public criticism by a PAP minister in the early 1960s in response to his inaugural lecture as professor of English. The university professors were unionized and hundreds of faculty rallied behind Enright in the cause of protecting freedom of speech. In the case of Dr. Chee, not one academic publicly rallied to his defense. What had happened to my university? I wondered.*

The dark side of the Singaporean story is that the PAP, led by Prime Minister Lee, set out to crush alternative sources of power, especially opposition parties and labor organizations that threatened to disrupt their plans for economic development.

*The same day I meet with Beng Huat, the Straits Times runs a report on a new book titled *Men in White*, which discusses the PAP's political struggles in the 1960s. For the first time, Lee is quoted as admitting that the "communist" label was applied to a wide swath of political opponents who pursued left-wing political activities without necessarily being card-carrying communists.*

In 1961, the left wing of the PAP split from the party, forming the Barisan Socialis (BS), or Socialist Front. Two opposing groups came to dominate the political scene, with the PAP and the progovernment National Trade Unions Congress (NTUC) on one side, and the BS and its affiliate body, the Singapore Association of Trade Unions (SATU), on the other. Following two by-elections in 1961, the PAP clung to power with only a tiny margin, and it was possibly around this time that the party, as Carl A. Trocki puts it, "began to plan its coup d'état, known as 'Operation Cold Store.'"<sup>20</sup> On February 3, 1963, the security forces struck, and nearly 150 journalists, student leaders, labor activists, and opposition politicians were arbitrarily detained. No charges were filed and they

were held without trial for more than three months in grim conditions at the Outram Road Prison. The government invoked the Internal Security Act, a product of colonial times that the PAP had promised to repeal—yet it remains in force today. The BS-associated SATU was legislated out of existence when its application for registration was refused, with the government-affiliated NTUC as the main beneficiary. As Lee explains, the militant labor unions did not aim “to get the economy cured and growing but to create more problems so there would be more unemployment, so the system would collapse. . . . Because if the economy got going, the system will prevail and communism will not take over. So . . . endless strikes, go-slows, sit-ins, all sorts of demonstrations to block the economy and slow it down. . . . Then after Malaysia, it began to clean up. If you call a political strike without taking a ballot, you get deregistered.”<sup>21</sup> Basically, militant labor unions were curtailed and effectively barred from the political process,<sup>22</sup> measures that would have been difficult, if not impossible, to implement in a democratic context. The economic model lasted for a couple of decades under the PAP’s nearly hegemonic political power.

Following the 1985 recession, the Singapore government decided to move out of manufacturing industries that depended on cheap labor and increase its dependence on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to generate investment and employment, but new ventures were usually carried out by SMEs in partnerships with government-led corporations, with the result that government control over and involvement in SMEs actually increased.<sup>23</sup> Not surprisingly, curbs on independent labor organizations remained in place to ensure stability for economic actors, both foreign and local. Political repression has become more sporadic, but it is still effective at silencing dissent. Here too, Lee’s words tell the story. A government, he explains, needs “big sticks” in order to govern. No need “to use it often. Use it once, twice, against big people. The rest will take notice.”<sup>24</sup>

The government also justifies curbs on democratic politics because of its approach to social welfare. It provides a large-scale, self-funded public housing program, a self-funded pension, and largely free education, but there is no unemployment insurance, free medical care, or state-sponsored pension plan for those outside the formal workforce.<sup>25</sup> The main concern is that state-funded welfare programs would slow down economic development and not be sustainable over the long term. Lee is explicit that opposition movements would seek to “break the bank,” with the implication that it is legitimate to use “big sticks” against them: “[Y]ou are competing against people who not only promise not to maintain the investment rate, but . . . to spend what there is [already saved] in the kitty . . . and if an electorate is sufficiently naïve to believe that these things can be done, you break the bank.”<sup>26</sup> Here too, democratic politics would have undermined the PAP’s economic plans.

The PAP is also notorious for intervening in “private” affairs for the purpose of economic development. From economic incentives for educated mothers to bans on the sale of chewing gum, the PAP has shown few qualms about interfering in the details of everyday life in its quest for prosperity. Again, Lee is very open about the government’s ways: “[W]e would not have made economic progress, if we had not intervened in very personal matters—who your neighbor is, how you live, the noise you make, how you spit, what language you use. We decide what is right. Never mind what the people think.”<sup>27</sup> The results of Singapore’s development model are captured in the Singaporean journalist Cherian George’s memorable metaphor: “Think of Singapore as the air-conditioned nation—a society with a unique blend of comfort and central control, where people have mastered their environment, but at the cost of individual autonomy.”<sup>28</sup>

Why does any of this matter? Perhaps Singaporeans simply don’t value individual autonomy as much as, say, Americans. As Lee puts it, Singaporeans have “little doubt that a society with communitarian values where the interests of society take precedence over that of the individual suits them better than the individualism of America.”<sup>29</sup> But the problem is that political repression undermines communitarian aims, meaning that it actually promotes self-centered individualism rather than commitment to the national community. Even the occasional use of “big sticks” against opposition politicians such as Chee Soon Juan sends an unpatriotic message to the community: “in Singapore, better to mind your own business, make money, and leave politics to the politicians.”<sup>30</sup> Is it any wonder that Singaporeans, according to a recent survey, are the “most apathetic when it comes to involvement in political actions, whether in the form of signing a petition, joining in boycotts or attending lawful demonstrations. Singaporeans consistently ranked last among her five East Asian neighbors in all three areas of political involvement.”<sup>31</sup>

The majority of people may react to political repression by becoming apathetic, but some will become frustrated and seek opportunities elsewhere, with the result that Singapore has been losing some of its best talent to foreign states. A 2007 survey of young Singaporeans revealed that more than half wanted to migrate to another country. And many are acting on that desire, especially the upwardly mobile. The average outflow rate per thousand citizens is 26.11 in Singapore—the second highest in the world—at least partly due to the restrictive political atmosphere and a feeling that rules and regulations are excessive.<sup>32</sup> Again, the government is aware of the problem: as former premier Goh puts it, “The more we educate Singaporeans, and the more opportunities we create for them, the more internationally mobile they will become. The more they gain from subsidized HDB housing, the more money they have to buy cheaper

houses in Australia. Will Singaporeans be rooted in Singapore? Will enough Singaporeans stay here, to ensure our country's long-term survival? . . . I take issue with those fair-weather Singaporeans who, having benefited from Singapore, will pack their bags and take flight when our country runs into a little storm."<sup>33</sup> The government has responded by bringing in foreign talent, but most Singaporeans believe that foreign talent "will have no commitment to the country in times of crisis."<sup>34</sup>

*As requested, I submit the reading list for my "Introduction to Political Theory" class to the head of the department. He calls me into his office, tells me to teach more communitarianism instead of liberalism and feminism, and emphasizes that I should not teach John Stuart Mill to first-year students because they haven't yet reached the required level of maturity. Naturally, this makes me want to do the opposite. I teach Mill's On Liberty, making sure to read the concluding sentences to the whole class:*

*The worth of a State, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it; and a State which postpones the interests of their mental expansion and elevation, to a little more of administrative skill, or of that semblance of it which practice gives, in the details of business; a State which dwarfs its men, in order that they may be more docile instruments in its hands even for beneficial purposes—will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished; and that the perfection of machinery to which it has sacrificed everything, will in the end avail it nothing, for want of the vital power which, in order that their machine might work more smoothly, it has preferred to banish.*

When political repression is combined with thoroughgoing paternalism, even of the well-intentioned kind that is designed for the present and future enjoyment of citizens, people become even more materialistic and less public-spirited than they would otherwise be. The Singaporean sociologist Kwok Kian Woon draws on Alexis de Tocqueville to lament what has happened to Singapore:

[Under a "good despotism," citizens are ruled by] an immense and tutelary power, which takes upon itself alone their gratifications, and to watch over their fate. . . . For their happiness such a government willingly labors, but it chooses to be the sole agent and the only arbiter of that happiness: it provides for their security, foresees and supplies their necessities, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principal concerns, directs their industry, regulates the descent of property, and subdivides their inheri-

tances—what remains but to spare them all the care of thinking and all the trouble of living?<sup>35</sup>

Kwok further invokes Tocqueville to make the point that subjects of such a regime would lack trust in their fellows, have no interest in public affairs, and certainly have no inclination to sacrifice their own private interests for the sake of the public good. Instead, “citizens” would turn their main attention to the material aspects of their private lives, once again to the benefit of the government itself: “Everybody is feverishly intent on making money or, already rich, on keeping his wealth intact. . . . It is in the nature of despotism that it should foster such desires and propagate their havoc. Lowering as they do the national morale, they are despotism’s safeguard since they divert men’s attention from public affairs.”<sup>36</sup>

The excessive materialism of Singaporeans is no great secret. The former foreign minister S. Rajaratnam once described Singapore’s mass ideology as “moneytheism.”<sup>37</sup> For Singaporeans, according to the former prime minister Goh Chok Tong, “life is not complete without shopping.”<sup>38</sup> The Singaporean dream is colloquially known as the “five Cs”: career, condominium, car, club, and credit card. In a recent survey, 50 percent of Singaporeans indicated that they were indifferent to national citizenship so long as they could attain wealth.<sup>39</sup>

*In Jurong West, my wife and I became close friends with a Chinese-speaking shopkeeper in our district. She hated the PAP, and Lee Kuan Yew in particular, and voted for the opposition Workers’ Party. The problem was not just that she worked hard for a low salary but also that she was constantly made to feel inferior by government inspectors and government propaganda against “backward” Chinese dialects. In our view, she was kind and intelligent. We celebrated Chinese holidays with her friends and she also became close friends with my parents-in-law. I had planned to see her during my last trip, but her mother had recently passed away and she would not leave her home, in accordance with traditional Confucian mourning rituals.*

Singapore did indeed accomplish an economic miracle. Today, it has the world’s fifth highest per capita GDP. Its economic model has been borrowed by many developing countries and millions of people have been lifted out of poverty: even “communist” countries like China follow the Singaporean model of reliance on multinational corporations to import capital, provide employment, and build up management skills. Singapore has 250 billion Singapore dollars in reserves that it saves for “a rainy day.” (Following the global financial crisis of 2009, the Singapore government made the unprecedented decision to dip into the country’s reserves.)

Like most miracles, however, Singapore's economic miracle is also something of a mirage. For Marxists, the problem is that people are still treated as means for economic productivity: they work long hours and treat work as a means to life rather than life's prime want (even the elderly are made to work in greater numbers so that Singapore can stay ahead in the Darwinian struggle for national economic competitiveness: the portion of Singaporeans older than age sixty-five in the workforce increased 57 percent between 1993 and 2003, even though only 5 percent of Singaporeans want to work past the retirement age of sixty-five).<sup>40</sup> For liberals, the problem is that the government's heavy hand curbs individual autonomy and creativity. For social democrats, the problem is the lack of state-sponsored welfare, which results in suffering for the disadvantaged and high income-inequality (in 2006, Singapore ranked 105th in the world in terms of income inequality alongside countries such as Burundi and Kenya; nearly 30 percent of households were not earning enough to afford the minimum standard of living).<sup>41</sup> And for communitarians, the deepest problem is that the economic model is supported by an authoritarian and paternalistic politics that encourages self-centered individualism rather than public-spirited commitment to the national community. Again, Cherian George puts it well: "Singapore's tragedy is not the absence of idealism, but that it systematically rewards the individualistic majority and discourages the socially-conscious minority."<sup>42</sup> No wonder Lee came to the realization that Singaporeans would need "another 30, 40, 50 years" before they would develop passion for the national community.<sup>43</sup> What he failed to add is that his political system is largely responsible for the slow pace of process.

#### THE VALUE OF MULTIRACIALISM

*While going through some old boxes last year, I stumbled on a photocopy of the "mission statement" I wrote in 1990 when I applied for a job at the National University of Singapore. Here's what I wrote: "I am most impressed by Singapore's experience with multiculturalism. Here in Quebec, the Francophone separatist movement is still active and tensions between Francophones and Anglophones continue to erupt. Yet Singapore has managed to completely defuse ethnic conflict. Less than three decades after race riots in the 1960s, the different cultural communities coexist in harmony and equality. I plan to study and learn from the Singapore experience." I laughed when I read it, thinking, "Did I really believe what I wrote or was I just desperate for a job?" I know I seemed naïve when I first arrived in Singapore—one of my colleagues would say, "He's new here," whenever I spoke—but was I really that naïve?*

Singapore is an ethnically plural society and the British colonial regime divided the society into fixed racial categories and stereotypes that persist to this

day.<sup>44</sup> The various groups did not always get along. In 1854, a riot between Chinese of different dialect groups lasted for twelve days and five hundred people were killed.<sup>45</sup> More than a century later, in 1964, riots between Chinese and Malays left thirty-six dead.

*A diplomat friend told me about a meeting he had with a Singaporean minister. He praised Singapore's efforts to sustain ethnic peace, but the minister laughed and said, "It's not so mysterious. All you have to do is keep the guns here" (pointing under the table).*

Since then, the PAP has cracked down hard on any manifestations of "ethnic chauvinism" that threaten to erupt into violence. It is not always easy to distinguish between "sticks" used to secure peace and those used to secure the power of the PAP—in one notorious case from the mid-1990s, the popular opposition politician Tang Liang Hong was hounded out of Singapore after the PAP accused him of being a Chinese chauvinist<sup>46</sup>—but the PAP has successfully prevented any outbreaks of ethnic violence since it came to power. Religion in particular is carefully controlled by means of a host of laws designed to prevent ethnic flare-ups. The government limits proselytizing and tries to be sensitive about all religious matters, especially concerning Islam. As former prime minister Goh put it, "When religion is involved there is no way you quench the fire once it is started, and we are very fearful of that."<sup>47</sup> The basic idea is to keep the followers of different religions separate as a way of securing a *modus vivendi*, rather than fostering interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding that might lead to a greater sense of national community.

Outside the religious realm, however, the PAP did try to pursue more integrative policies. The main aim was to combat ethnic parochialism by fostering the growth of a new Singaporean identity that would underpin security and prosperity. Hence, it adopted "multiracialism" as a founding principle, meaning that the different groups should mix in social settings while maintaining their distinctive cultural practices and live in equality and peace. One integrative policy was the national public housing program known as the HDB (Housing Development Board). Before HDB flats were built, the population resided in relatively discrete and homogenous ethnic enclaves. To foster "racial harmony," the government has enforced physical integration of the races within the housing estates. It broke up "racial districts through squatter clearance and re-housing different residents into high-rise, high-density, public-housing estates. The different races have been redistributed by quota into each housing estate and into each block of public housing. As it stands, each block of public housing will re-

flect approximately the proportion of the racial composition of the total Singaporean population; approximately 75 percent Chinese, 17 percent Malay and 8 percent Indians.<sup>48</sup> The integrative housing policy has obvious disadvantages, such as uprooting people from their communities, freezing racial categories, imposing costs on “hybrid” families, and making it harder for minority groups to pursue their religious activities (e.g., the proximity of the toilet to the kitchen in HDB flats, a practice inherited from the design of colonial Chinese shop houses, makes it harder for Hindus to follow traditional rituals of cleanliness).<sup>49</sup> But it also helps to explain the absence of violence between the different racial groups since the PAP took power. And the fact that people living in publicly subsidized housing have been given a sense of ownership (today, 85 percent of the population lives in HDB housing, of which 80 percent have ninety-nine-year leases on their flats) means that most Singaporeans now have a stake in the nation’s prosperity, one of the key pillars of nation building.

*It took a while to gain the confidence of my students. Eventually, however, the students loosened up, especially during small-group tutorials in my office. Shortly before I left Singapore, I asked a few students how many would willingly sacrifice their lives for their country in the event of a war, and nobody answered affirmatively (one said he would do it for his family but not his nation).*

Another integrative measure was national service. Lee did not have confidence that Singapore could be independent in providing its own security, but he was persuaded by Dr. Goh to build up a national army and to implement compulsory military service. Singapore did have a model—Israel—in meeting its security challenges. As a small country surrounded by large, potentially hostile, and predominantly Muslim neighbors, Singapore looked to Israel for guidance. As Lee put it, “We intend to fight for our stake in this part of the world, and [to] anybody who thinks they can push us around, I say: over my dead body. . . . We opted for the Israeli fashion, for in our situation we think it might be necessary not only to train every boy but also every girl to be a disciplined and effective digit in defense of their country.”<sup>50</sup> Lee’s government invited a group of Israeli military advisers (disguised as Mexicans to avoid upsetting the Muslim neighbors) to provide covert training of Singapore’s defense force, and in 1967 Singapore introduced an Israeli-style policy of compulsory national service. The effectiveness of national service as an integrative device, however, has been limited. Only men are conscripted (unlike in Israel) and there is limited enlistment of Malays, who could not be trusted to fight for Singapore in the event of a war with its neighbors<sup>51</sup> (though national service has been more open to Malays of late). Plus, Singapore (unlike Israel) has not fought a war since independence,



and the value of national service is frequently questioned, especially in private. As *Straits Times* columnist Koh Buck Song put it, “There is, quite clearly, some cynicism about the whole business of defending a country. . . . I have seen some, from bosses to observers without vested interests, not only being dismissive of the sacrifice involved in National Service, but also apparently devoid of any patriotic feeling.”<sup>52</sup>

With respect to language, the PAP felt it had to make even more unpopular decisions. In the early 1960s, it decided to have four official languages (Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, and English) with Malay as the national language. Singapore’s future was viewed in the context of a merger with Malaya, and non-Malays were encouraged to learn Malay. The Malays were also given special recognition as indigenous peoples, mostly symbolic, in the Constitution.<sup>53</sup> After independence in 1965, however, the PAP veered away from the “Malay-centric” ethnic and language policies. But it could not create a new identity by favoring Chinese culture and language without causing serious internal tension and inviting criticism if not aggression from neighboring countries. Hence, the government decided to promote English as the main language of education, with “mother tongues” as secondary. English also had the advantage of being the main language of international commerce and trade, and thus widespread use of English would give Singapore a competitive edge. The promotion of English also involved overriding the wishes of all groups, however, including the majority Chinese. Lee explicitly states that Singapore’s language policy was incompatible with majority rule:

Supposing we had chosen Chinese or tried to sponsor Chinese, how would we make a living? How would we fit ourselves into the region and into the world? We could not have made a living. But the Chinese then would have wanted it. And if we had taken the vote, we would have had to follow that policy. So when people say, “Oh, ask the people!”, it’s childish rubbish. We are leaders. We know the consequences. . . . They say people can think for themselves? Do you honestly believe the chap who can’t pass primary six knows the consequences of his choice when he answers a question viscerally, on language, culture, and religion? But we knew the consequences. We would starve, we would have race riots. We would disintegrate.<sup>54</sup>

Of course, the English language policy also served the PAP leaders’ interests. For one thing, they were part of the minority of relatively privileged English-educated Singaporeans whose power could be made more secure in an English-speaking environment. Christopher Tremewan argues that the PAP could also

use the English-educated to demolish the Chinese-educated and destroy the Chinese working-class political opposition.<sup>55</sup>

Though such autocratic measures—the breaking up of ethnic enclaves, compulsory military service, and English-language education—were highly unpopular at first, it could be argued that they were gradually accepted by the population at large. By the mid-1980s, for example, most Singaporeans were comfortable with English as the leading medium of education and government, and few argued for the reestablishment of residential ethnic enclaves. Perhaps nation building really was on the verge of success.

*September 2009. After a couple of hours with Chua Beng Huat at the hawker center, we are joined by another old friend, the political theorist Benjamin Wong. Ben and Beng Huat greet each other warmly and break out in a more heavily accented Singaporean English, an accent I've always found appealing because it reminds me of the way some Francophones speak English in Quebec. After more hawker food and cold beer, I ask Ben what one thing he thinks the Singapore government could do to improve. He says that the government should loosen up on the regulation of culture and language. He points out that Toronto, where he did his doctoral work, is even more multicultural than Singapore and yet the various groups generally get along fine and don't need to be constantly reminded of language and culture difference, made to feel inferior if they speak "hybrid" languages like Singlish, or forced to fit into different racial classifications.*

At that point, the government could have loosened up on the regulation and remaking of culture, allowing for more natural expression and evolution. Perhaps it could have progressively reduced, if not eliminated, compulsory military service, moving to a Costa Rican model of demilitarization rather than continuing with the Israeli model. It could also have pursued integrative policies of a softer character, like a one-year compulsory period of national civil service open to young Singaporeans of both genders. And the whole process could have been accompanied by political liberalization and more freedom of speech, since the government would have less need to rely on strong-arm measures to secure domestic tranquility.

But history took a different turn. The PAP decided to prioritize ethnic identities, especially Chinese (Mandarin) language and culture. It launched "Speak Mandarin" campaigns that encouraged Chinese Singaporeans to speak Mandarin rather than dialects in social settings. In education, the government placed more emphasis on mother-tongue teaching, with children of each "racial group" being forced to study their "own" language in addition to English (though the government has since recognized that the bilingual policy was too demanding,

and it has cut back on language requirements for admission to university). In the late 1980s, the government also promoted religious education in secondary schools, with different religions corresponding roughly to the different ethnic groups. Most controversial, the government promoted ethnic-based welfare by scrapping the idea of a national organization for the underachievers of all ethnic groups in favor of an ethnic-based welfare scheme, with each group looking after “its own” poor.

It is worth asking why the government’s official rhetoric and policies took an ethnic turn in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The most charitable explanation is that Singaporean leaders were driven by economic imperatives. They had sufficient foresight in the late 1980s to anticipate the economic and political rise of China and decided that Singapore should emphasize its “Chineseness” to maintain its comparative advantage in the international marketplace. As it turns out, China has become Singapore’s third largest trading partner and biggest investment destination, and the two countries signed a free-trade agreement in late 2008.

Another possible reason for the renewed emphasis on ethnicity may lie in Lee’s own personality and the fact that other “founding fathers” (who had lost political clout) were less able to constrain Lee’s own preferences than they had been earlier.<sup>56</sup> Lee never hid his outlook: “You know there are innate prejudices. And I don’t pretend that I don’t share those prejudices. I do. If one of my sons had come back and said, ‘I’ve got this American lady who I met in America,’ my first question is, what color is she?”<sup>57</sup> He is also explicit that his own racial identity actually strengthened over the years: “Everybody knows that we are a long way, very long way from a real, genuine, Singaporean Chinese. . . . One reason why I am now perhaps more Chinese than I was 30 years, 40 years ago, is because, as a result of learning, reading and so on, growing old, I understand that human nature does not change.”<sup>58</sup> Perhaps he came to the “realization” that those prejudices are also deeply held by others, with the implication that it’s best to work with them rather than to put forth policies based on the utopian assumption that they can be transcended.

Ethnic-based welfare has been criticized because it imposes costs on children of mixed marriages who are forced into the government’s racial categories.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, the formal equality among ethnic groups tends to mask the fact that legal equality of treatment favors the disproportionately well-off Chinese group.<sup>60</sup> With a lower demographic and financial basis, Malays do not have the same capacity to help underachieving and relatively poor Malays, so the inequalities between groups are perpetuated, if not exacerbated.<sup>61</sup>

*In 1992, I was asked to teach a large (more than three hundred students) first-year “Introduction to Political Theory” course. I had replaced an expatriate who relied*

solely on Western sources, and I decided to give greater recognition to Asian civilizations in the course curriculum. The course started off with the theme of “Politics without Morality,” but instead of Machiavelli, I decided to draw on the ancient Chinese thinker Han Feizi (ca. 280–233 BCE) a profoundly cynical proponent of realpolitik who is regarded as a founder of the Legalist school in Chinese political thought. I used Chinese characters from Han Fei’s original text during the lectures, which most students could understand. In the next part of the course, on “Morality without Politics,” I discussed the views of anarchist thinkers but made an effort to discuss the views of Daoist thinkers as well. And for the last part, on “Morality and Politics,” I drew on Aristotle and Mill but also discussed the views of Confucius. I hoped that students would appreciate my attempts to incorporate more Asian viewpoints in the course syllabus.

Shortly before my last lecture, a student slipped a letter signed X under my office door. It was not friendly. The student accused me of racism—more specifically, of glorifying Chinese thinkers and denigrating the cultural contributions of minority groups. I tried to rebut the accusations in class, but a Singaporean colleague and friend pointed out that I was partly to blame because I had discussed the contributions only of Chinese thinkers. The point is not whether I actually endorsed their arguments; merely presenting them in class showed that I took them seriously. And by excluding the contributions of Muslim and Indian thinkers from the curriculum, I was implicitly sending the message that their views were unimportant and uninteresting—or at least that is how it would be seen by Malay and Indian students. My use of Chinese characters further contributed to the alienation of minority students, since they would not be able to follow. I subsequently tried to correct the bias by incorporating relevant readings from classics in the Islamic and Hindu traditions and sticking to English in class.

Combined with the “Speak Mandarin” slogans plastered all over Singapore and Lee’s open defense of the idea that “strong Chinese values” can and should influence non-Chinese Singaporeans, such de facto favoritism for the relatively well-off Chinese majority exacerbated the political alienation of minority groups in Singapore.<sup>62</sup> The PAP responded with measures to increase minority groups’ political representation, such as a system of guaranteeing a seat for minority candidates in multiseat constituencies termed the Group Representation Constituency (GRC) system. But such measures were also designed to solidify the PAP’s grip on power: the political motivation was made explicit shortly before the 1997 election when the PAP increased the size of GRCs from four to six seats without increasing minority representation.

Obviously, such ethnic-based policies seem particularly problematic from the perspective of nation building because the government is effectively sanctioning the privileging of attachment to the racial group over attachment to the

nation. As the opposition politician Chee Soon Juan puts it, “These race-based communities will become increasingly inward looking and their concerns more communally parochial. It is difficult to see, in such a set-up, how a strong national spirit can be forged.”<sup>63</sup> In view of Singapore’s sensitive geopolitical context, it is worth inquiring further about political motives that may help to explain the renewed emphasis on ethnicity, and Chineseness in particular. Whatever the costs to nation building, Singapore’s call for pride in Asian culture also coincided with the interests of leaders of less than democratic neighboring countries, so there was less to worry about on that front.

*A couple of years into my contract, I attended a talk at the National University of Singapore by a prominent Singaporean diplomat and public intellectual. It was titled “Why Southeast Asia Is Doing Better than Southeast Europe”—at the time, Indonesia was politically stable under President Suharto and Yugoslavia was breaking up into warring ethnic tribes—and his answer was basically that authoritarian regimes helped to secure the peace and provide the foundation for economic development. (Suharto’s regime collapsed a few years later and Indonesia has become a flourishing democracy.) Although I have a strong aversion to Western political preaching, I was really put off by the speaker’s smug tone and could not restrain myself. I went up to the microphone, said that I’m also interested in comparative politics, and asked why Singapore is the only developed country, other than a few oil-rich states in the Gulf, that hasn’t adopted political democracy. I regretted my words as soon as I spoke, knowing that I had fallen into the trap of a great polemicist. The speaker responded that I’m a typical Westerner with an imperial mindset who thinks that democracy is best for everybody, and I should reflect more on my own prejudices. Most of the audience applauded.*

It is no coincidence that the renewed emphasis on Asian pride and heritage took place at the same time the Soviet empire was collapsing and liberal democracy seemed to be sweeping the globe. Singapore’s leaders became concerned about the inroads made by Western culture and values, especially ideas of political democracy. Their response was to construct the notion of “Asian values,” a term devised for the purpose of challenging Western-style civil and political freedoms. The most common argument put forward in the name of Asian values was that such freedoms need to be sacrificed in order to meet more basic material needs.<sup>64</sup> But the Asian values message soon came under critical scrutiny. Even if it is true that freedoms need to be sacrificed in the early stages of development, why should they continue to be sacrificed now that Singapore has become one of the world’s wealthiest countries in terms of GDP per capita? Is the argument really about values or is it an empirical argument about tradeoffs

between competing goods? And what exactly are the values that are supposed to be shared throughout a region as diverse as Asia? Does democratic India also share those values? In response to such criticisms, Lee soon shifted ground, claiming that he was really referring only to values shared by East Asian countries with a Confucian heritage underpinning their economic development. But are they really “Confucian” values?

*Shortly after I left Singapore, I had lunch with an influential proponent of Confucianism who was teaching at a major American university. He had been invited to help design the Confucian ethics curriculum in Singapore schools in the late 1980s (as part of a religious ethics curriculum that was ultimately abandoned because it threatened to reignite religious controversies) and had had personal interactions with Lee Kuan Yew. I asked about Lee’s interest in Confucianism, and my interlocutor simply sighed and said, “He doesn’t understand, he doesn’t understand.”*

Confucianism is a rich and diverse tradition with certain common threads. In politics, it emphasizes rule by ritual and moral example rather than reliance on punishment, the pursuit of harmony rather than conformity, and a political ideal of a peaceful and borderless world. In addition, the dominant Mencian strain holds the optimistic view that human nature can flourish with the right sort of moral education. The early Confucians were severely criticized by Legalist thinkers such as Han Feizi on the grounds that light rule would lead to disaster in a dangerous world full of self-interested political actors. Hence, state power needed to be strengthened by means of laws and harsh punishments. Han Fei’s aim was nothing less than total state control, and he repeatedly stressed that moral considerations should not get in the way. Not surprisingly, rulers were quite receptive to this sort of advice, starting with the ruthless king of Qin who ascended to the throne in 246 BCE and drew on Han Fei’s advice to conquer and rule all of China under the title of First Emperor of the Qin dynasty. As well as building (part of) the Great Wall and the necropolis complex of terracotta warriors, the king of Qin buried several hundred Confucian scholars alive with their books. This dynasty was short-lived but Han Fei’s influence persisted.

So yes, Lee Kuan Yew may have been influenced by Chinese political culture. But the Legalist influence is far more apparent. To be fair, Lee has yet to kill any of his political opponents or openly defend the killing of innocent people. But his cynical view that you “either dominate or you are dominated,”<sup>65</sup> his reliance on harsh punishments to control the lives of his subjects, his aversion to pluralism, his lack of humility, his hardball tactics against critical journalists and opposition voices, and his calls for a “rugged society” to underpin a strong and rich state all point to Lee as a modern Legalist. Perhaps that’s the key reason Lee

turned away from nation building and integrative policies in the mid-1980s. At that time, nation building could have been enhanced by political liberalization. But instead Lee needed to emphasize racial divisions because there's no better means to smother calls for political liberalization. The aim, in his mind, is to build a strong state rather than a strong nation.

#### THE VALUE OF MERITOCRACY

*A letter, sent by regular mail to my mother's address in Montreal, informed me that I'd be interviewed for a teaching post in the department of political science at the National University. I prepared diligently for the interview, reviewing the greats of political theory as well as recent debates. I expected to be interviewed by a panel of experts who would aim to pick the best candidate by testing knowledge of the field. They paid for my ticket to Washington, DC, and I took a taxi to the address on the letter. To my surprise, it was the Singaporean embassy, not a university. I was ushered upstairs and, to my further surprise, I was met by the Singaporean ambassador to the United States. The ambassador greeted me and asked me to sit down. First question: Why did you go to Cuba in 1985? I wondered how he had found out—to this day, I still don't know the answer—and told him it was part of a tour organized by McGill University to learn about tropical agriculture. Second question: Are you a communist? No, I answered, definitely not; I'm a communitarian. It's a movement in political theory that calls into question the individualistic tendencies of liberalism. He seemed satisfied by that answer and said, "Enjoy your stay in Singapore." End of interview. I was pleased by the outcome but puzzled by the process and harbored doubts about whether I truly deserved the job. Had I been hired because I was the best candidate or just because I espoused communitarianism?*

The government of Singapore is elected by the people, but the electoral process is not democratic, even according to the minimal definition of democracy as holding free and fair competitive elections for the country's most important political decision makers. As Samuel Huntington notes, such elections are possible only if there is some measure of free speech, assembly, and press, and if opposition candidates and parties are able to criticize incumbents without fear of retaliation.<sup>66</sup> But in Singapore, individual ballots are numbered (the government, at least in principle, can check who voted for what party, which could be a restraining influence on those who might otherwise vote for the opposition); promising opposition candidates are publicly humiliated, bankrupted, and/or sacked from their jobs on dubious grounds; the government explicitly threatens to withdraw services, such as upgrading of public housing, from constituencies that support the opposition; and the progovernment media provides little, if

any, time and space for the opposition to present its views. But such antidemocratic practices should not come as a surprise, given Lee Kuan Yew's very public arguments against democracy. His son Lee Hsien Loong, the current prime minister of Singapore, made similar arguments: "Suppose you have 10, 15, 20, opposition members in Parliament. Instead of spending my time thinking what is the right policy for Singapore, I'm going to spend my time thinking of ways to fix them, to buy my supporters 'vote.'"<sup>67</sup>

In the minds of most foreign observers, Singapore should be labeled an authoritarian state. But Singapore's leaders do not accept the premise that a state should be described as either democratic or authoritarian. Rather, they argue that the concept of meritocracy best describes Singapore's political system: given Singapore's small population and limited resource base, the country should be led by the people with the greatest talent and best characters, chosen according to merit. Let us borrow Lee Kuan Yew's own words once again:

Singapore is a society based on effort and merit, not wealth and privilege depending on birth. [The elite provides] the direction, planning, and control of [state] power] in the people's interest. . . . It is on this group that we expend our limited and slender resources in order that they will provide the yeast, that ferment, that catalyst in our society which alone will ensure that Singapore shall maintain . . . the social organization which enables us, with almost no natural resources, to provide the second highest standard of living in Asia. . . . The main burden of present planning and implementation rests on the shoulders of some 300 key persons. . . . The people come from poor and middle class homes. They come from different language schools. Singapore is a meritocracy. And these men have risen through their own merit, hard work and high performance.<sup>68</sup>

The basic idea of meritocracy is that everybody should have an equal opportunity to be educated and to contribute to society and politics, but not everybody will emerge from the process with an equal capacity to make informed moral and political judgments. Hence, the task of politics is to identify those with above-average ability and to make them serve the community. If the leaders perform well, the people will basically go along.

*My wife and I attend a meeting of Singapore's Oxford/Cambridge Society, with a Singapore government minister as guest speaker. The speaker is asked why the government needs to limit distribution of periodicals such as the Far Eastern Economic Review, given that they can be easily obtained by crossing the border into Malaysia. He replies, laughing, "Of course we know that. We're not worried about you. The*



*smart ones will find ways to get information; that's fine. We're worried about the HDB heartlanders [lower- to middle-class people living in public housing]; they're the ones we need to look after, to make sure they are taken care of and not exposed to too much information that can play on the emotions."*

Such an approach resonates strongly with the Confucian ideals of Singapore's Chinese community: as Lee Hsien Loong explains, "many Confucian ideals are still relevant to us. An example is the concept of government by honourable men (*junzi*), who have a duty to do right for the people, and who have the trust and respect of the population. This fits us better than the Western concept that a government should be given as limited powers as possible, and always be treated with suspicion, unless proved otherwise."<sup>69</sup>

It is easy to dismiss such statements as the self-serving arguments of leaders who seek to justify constraints on democracy. But the Singapore government, perhaps more than any other government in the world, has attempted to institutionalize the ideal of political meritocracy. The Singapore educational system is ruthlessly competitive, with the top performers "groomed for future command."<sup>70</sup> Cabinet ministers have outstanding educational and performance records, and an increasing proportion of political leaders enter government service through an achievement-based government scholarship.<sup>71</sup> In the late 1960s, the PAP fielded several candidates with PhDs, but Lee discovered that academic achievement alone was not sufficient, eventually turning to technocrats with proven records of performance. By the mid-1980s, party recruitment also included a growing number of "scholar-soldiers" from the Singapore Armed Forces. Dr. Goh worked out a more formal and standardized selection process influenced by the Shell Corporation's system of choosing executives with "helicopter quality," meaning the ability to focus on critical details while keeping the big picture in perspective. The process involves recommendations by government and corporate leaders, "tea parties" with ministers, an extensive probe into a candidate's character, motivation, and ability to be a "team player," and then interviews with top government officials. Candidates are then deployed in different constituencies to undergo basic training and engage in political work at the grassroots level, and those with ministerial potential are given one and a half days of psychological testing, involving more than one thousand questions. The examinations are meant to test for power of analysis, imagination, and sense of reality.<sup>72</sup>

Still, it's worth asking if the rigorous selection process adopted by the PAP is as meritocratic as it could be. For one thing, the system seems biased in favor of high performers in the same academic areas pursued by government leaders when they were students. The chosen individuals tend to have "backgrounds in

law, engineering, science, business management and other essentially formalist or quantitative disciplines.”<sup>73</sup> Is it possible that the selection of high performers in the humanities could lead to a more humane form of government? If the government were really inspired by Confucian ideals, it might consider the view that political leaders should be trained in the “six arts,” including music, designed to improve moral judgment and the powers of empathy, not simply the ability to manage the state in the most efficient way.

The selection process also seems to reinforce traditional biases, meaning that the opportunities for mobility in education and politics may not be as open as advertised. The gender bias is most evident—there has yet to be a single female cabinet member in Singapore’s political history, and the increased reliance on “scholar-soldiers” (who have never done any actual fighting) does not augur well for change. The system also seems to reward political conformity and to exclude creative and critical voices that may not look like team players. Despite some scholarships designed to pay the school fees of the few needy students who excel against all odds, Singapore-style meritocracy is severely constrained by the operation of class and privilege: “the elite schools have been ‘elite’ not only in the sense that they have exceptionally high academic and teaching standards, but also in that they cater almost exclusively for children from socially and financially privileged families.”<sup>74</sup> And the overlap of class and race—with the Malays being the poorest community in Singapore—means that the system also has a built-in ethnic bias.<sup>75</sup> And things are getting worse: since the 1980s, the position of non-Chinese in the educational stakes has deteriorated.<sup>76</sup> The increased prominence of scholars with a military background among the political elite, along with the institutionalized discrimination against Malays in the military, can only exacerbate discrimination against minorities in the selection process for the political elite.

*A friend reports meeting with a former government minister. The former minister, visibly upset, asks, “Who is the most hated man in Singapore?” My friend replies, “You mean Lee Kuan Yew?” The former minister says, “Yes! He doesn’t trust anybody except his own family!”*

Lee Kuan Yew has lived by the Machiavellian maxim that it is better for a political leader to be feared than to be loved. His outspoken support for crackpot eugenics theories,<sup>77</sup> and his attempts to institutionalize them through schemes such as incentives for educated mothers to have babies and sterilization for the less-educated, were highly controversial—if only because they deviated from the value of equal opportunity that is at the heart of the meritocratic ideal—and this was one of the few times he was forced to retreat from his politi-

cal goals. But the most controversial feature of Singapore's political life—and the most obvious challenge to the ideal of meritocracy—is that fact that the Lee family controls so much of Singapore's political and economic power. Lee himself chairs the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation (GIC), the opaque sovereign wealth fund with estimated assets of U.S. \$330 billion.<sup>78</sup> His son is prime minister and vice-chairman of the wealth fund. His son's wife, Ho Ching, heads the government-linked Temasek Holdings (previously, she was chief executive of Singapore Technologies, the country's biggest government-linked conglomerate). Ho Ching was supposed to resign following Temasek's recent economic reversals but she has continued to serve since an American businessman declined the offer to head the organization. Lee Kuan Yew's youngest son, Lee Hsien Yang, was CEO of SingTel, the nation's telecommunications giant (and its largest listed company, with the government as the majority shareholder).<sup>79</sup> He is now the nonexecutive chairman of Fraser & Neave Limited (a major property developer and juice manufacturer) and chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore. No doubt the Lee family is talented, and its members have proven their ability in competitive academic settings, in business, and in politics. But it seems hard for anyone outside the Lee family to believe that their achievements are based entirely on ability, that family connections are only incidental, and that no one else is qualified to do what they're doing.

Another controversial feature of Singapore-style meritocracy is the idea that, as Lee Hsien Loong puts it, “in a meritocratic society, earning power corresponds to ability.”<sup>80</sup> Since government officials are supposed to be among the country's most talented, they receive handsome rewards for jobs well done. High-performing administrative officers in their early thirties get paid “hundreds of thousands [of Singapore dollars].”<sup>81</sup> At the apex of the pay scale are government ministers, with the prime minister himself receiving 3.1 million Singapore dollars a year, five times more than the salary of the U.S. president.<sup>82</sup> Obvious questions come to mind. Given that the government votes itself such salaries in the context of a severely authoritarian political environment with a compliant media, can such payments be described as legalized corruption?<sup>83</sup> And why should pay correspond to ability? Karl Marx said that the lower form of communism would be characterized by the meritocratic ideal—“from each according to his ability, to each according to his contribution”—but he went on to argue that “it tacitly recognizes unequal individual endowment and thus productive capacity as natural privileges.”<sup>84</sup> Why should people be rewarded according to natural talents that, as John Rawls famously put it, are “arbitrary from a moral point of view”? The Singapore government explains that such high salaries are necessary to prevent corruption and to attract persons of talent from the private sector,<sup>85</sup> and it might add, in a Rawlsian vein, that such highly paid po-

litical rulers enact policies that end up benefitting the worst-off Singaporeans. Nonetheless, it is hard to believe that astronomical salaries are really necessary to attract political talent.

From a nation-building perspective, here's the key objection: such salaries send a profoundly unpatriotic message to the community at large. If even founding fathers and the sons of founding fathers need to be motivated by obscene sums of money to serve the political community, why would anyone else bother serving the community?<sup>86</sup> The PAP itself often appeals to the Confucian idea that political leaders are supposed to serve as political exemplars for the rest of the community, but the model they set is that nobody should sacrifice for the national good without being paid lots of money for it. In 1998 and 1999, in the midst of the Asian economic crisis, ministerial and civil service salaries were frozen, but Central Provident Fund contributions of employers were scaled way back—in effect, a salary cut for most employees. As one letter writer to the *Straits Times* commented, “We will endure if our leaders endure with us.”<sup>87</sup> Yet one year later, huge salary increases were announced for government ministers (20 percent) and civil servants (13 percent) before ordinary people's pension contributions were restored.

But the “model from the top” may be just the surface manifestation of the atomizing effects of Singapore-style meritocracy. The deeper problem lies with the educational system that instills ultracompetitive behavior at young ages. In 1979, an education study team headed by Dr. Goh responded to the finding that many children did not cope well with learning two languages by proposing early “streaming” (tracking) for children at the end of primary 3 (third grade). An unintended effect of early streaming is that parents did all they could to prevent their children from being labeled as “failures,” leading to a drastic increase in recourse to private tutors and pressure on children to cram and get top results throughout every step of their school careers.<sup>88</sup> The pressure-cooker school system exacerbated “kiasuism,” a Hokkien term that literally means “afraid to lose,” referring to all kinds of small-mindedness and selfish behavior to get the better of others. The state attempts to counter kiasuism by means of public campaigns aimed at promoting gracious and civilized behavior, “but the spirit of competition and self-interest always seems to make a higher claim on people's behavior.”<sup>89</sup>

#### PATRIOTISM AND POLITICAL REPRESSION

*September 2009. Following a long absence, I return to Singapore for research. On the taxi ride from the airport, I ask the driver what he likes about Singapore. He says he's proud of his country, mentioning the cleanliness, the food, and the green-*

*ery. I ask if there have been any changes since I left in 1994, and he mentions the Flyer (a big Ferris wheel). I ask about politics, and he says it's pretty much the same: "We don't talk about politics here." I tell him I now live in China and say a few things in Chinese, but he says he was educated in English and doesn't speak much Chinese. He says he works twelve to fourteen hours per day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. His wife stays at home, and he has a sixteen-year-old daughter. He says he must pay for her schooling and asks me if it's true that education is free in Western countries. I tell him secondary education is usually free, but we don't get subsidized housing. Now that our conversation has become more intimate, I try to return to the theme of politics. He repeats the claim that we can't talk about politics. I ask why not, and he mentions Article 23, the internal security act that allows for detention without trial. I tell him surely nobody will get thrown in jail for talking about politics in a taxi, and he responds, "Why talk about politics? We have food, lah." He then asks if I want some jewelry for my wife; he knows where to go. I tell him no thanks. Then he offers to take me to Orchard Towers, the complex in downtown Singapore colloquially known as "four floors of whores." I say no thanks.*

My argument so far is that the Singaporean government has promoted three values—material well-being, multiracialism, and meritocracy—in ways that have systematically undermined the aim of nation building. Instead of forging a Singaporean nation composed of public-spirited citizens ready and willing to sacrifice for the common national good, the government has effectively promoted an extreme form of individualism that justifies ultracompetitive and selfish behavior. And yet, somehow, a nation seems to have emerged from the wreckage. According to a survey of 1,451 Singaporean citizens conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies, Singaporeans are very proud of their country, ranking third out of twenty-four countries, ahead of Canada and on a par with the United States. Almost all citizens—95 percent—agreed or strongly agreed that they were proud to be Singaporeans and that they loved Singapore. Among the various ethnic groups, Indians and Malays scored higher than the Chinese, and those with higher education scored lowest. Three in four Singaporeans said that they would not leave the country in the event of war, while two in three said that they would defend Singapore even if it meant losing their lives.<sup>90</sup> I was initially skeptical of these findings, if only because they seem much more positive than survey results quoted by the opposition. Is it really the case that Singaporeans love their country to the point of being willing to die for it? And how can it be that ethnic minorities and the poor, who are supposed to be victims of the system, are more patriotic than the rest? Perhaps their answers were not sincere? And perhaps the respondents were fooling themselves; when push comes to shove, will they really fight for their nation?

*During my 2009 visit, I am graciously hosted by the East Asian Institute, formerly the Institute of East Asian Political Economy, where my wife used to work. I learn with sadness that Dr. Goh's health is not good.<sup>91</sup> At the initial meeting, one of my wife's former bosses notes jokingly that I was not always a "harmonious" presence in Singapore. I laugh and say, yes, perhaps I was too impatient and confrontational in those days.*

But then it hit me. What if my theory was wrong? What if Singaporeans really are true patriots? Perhaps my own motivation should be questioned. I may have been looking for certain conclusions because of my own less than happy experience in Singapore, having arrived at a time when the nation seemed poised to embark on a path of political openness (perhaps only newly arrived foreigners like me were deluded). It could be that my expectations of a communitarian alternative to liberal individualism were romantic delusions. And maybe my own experience at the National University of Singapore was unusually bad luck: today, the department of political science is run by a respected American political theorist who applies the same meritocratic criteria that would operate in universities elsewhere. Perhaps I spent too much time talking with foreigners and critical intellectuals. Can it be that most ordinary Singaporeans view the country as a land of opportunity and upward mobility, particularly if they compare their fate to that of earlier generations and people in surrounding countries?

But my argument can't be entirely wrong. It draws on the words of political leaders and three years of lived experience, as well as social scientific research and in-depth discussions with reflective Singaporeans. Here's what may have happened: Singaporeans have become more patriotic since I left, a finding supported by the survey quoted earlier, which compares results with 1993. How could that have happened? For one thing, time may have done the trick. No matter what the government does, most people need a sense of belonging, and people grow attached to the place where they were born and bred. In the case of Singapore, one would expect more patriotism among the new generation, which did not experience the freer atmosphere of the 1960s and may not view their country as an "accidental" state. Food may be part of the explanation. As Lin Yutang put it, "What is patriotism but the love of food one ate as a child?"<sup>92</sup> It is certainly not hard to imagine growing attached to Singapore's magnificent and diverse cuisine.

*My hotel, as it turns out, is two blocks away from Orchard Towers. Out for a stroll, I walk into the Towers and am immediately propositioned by a tall "lady" of ambiguous gender characteristics. I say no thanks and turn inside to make use of the toilet facilities. A female voice on a loudspeaker says that smoking is strictly forbid-*

*den on the premises, but “other than that, have a good time.” I continue my stroll, but it’s too hot. I descend into a bar in the basement of the Grand Hyatt, right in the center of town. There is an excellent reggae band, and I’m immediately propositioned by a classy lady of the evening. When I say no thanks, she turns to a businessman at the next table. Yes, I knew that prostitution is effectively legalized in Singapore—more than fifteen years ago, my own wife accompanied some Chinese officials on a tour of state-sanctioned brothels to learn about how the Singapore government manages sex workers—but the place seems to have become a hotbed of the official and unofficial sex trade. I retreat to my hotel room and continue to reevaluate my earlier perceptions of Singapore.*

Over the course of the past fifteen years, the heavy hand of the state has loosened somewhat. The period of compulsory national service has been shortened from two and a half years to two years. Laws that have made Singapore the butt of jokes, such as the ban on the sale of chewing gum, have been relaxed or repealed (technology has taken care of some problems; for example, the invention of self-flushing urinals means that it’s no longer necessary to fine people who don’t flush toilets). It’s fair to say that the old pun about Singapore—“It’s a fine city”—has become obsolete. The government no longer sends constant reminders of how great a job it’s doing, instead letting actions (such as its effective measures to lead Singapore out of the Asian financial crisis of 1997 and the global financial crisis of late 2008) do most of the talking. The art scene is more lively, and satirical movies and works about Singaporean society and politics are tolerated, if not encouraged.<sup>93</sup> Even immigration policy has loosened up somewhat, with citizenship being awarded to American businessmen<sup>94</sup> and others who do not fit neatly in the government’s racial classification of the Singaporean person.

*My old friend Kevin Tan, formerly a professor of constitutional law at the National University of Singapore, takes me out to dinner with his family. He has pulled his two girls out of the school system in favor of home schooling. Kevin was indirectly criticized in a parliamentary debate by Lee Kuan Yew himself, and has been passed over for tenured positions, despite his outstanding scholarly output and teaching contributions. Today, he must content himself with part-time teaching appointments. He writes books on leaders in Singapore’s political history and heads a non-governmental organization (NGO) known as the Singapore Heritage Society. The NGO organizes talks on history and mobilizes to protect Singapore’s historical sites and buildings. Patriotism, he explains, is more than just material interest; there must be an emotional attachment to a place, and familiarity with history and buildings is part of the story. And his NGO is not just for Singaporeans: many foreign longtime residents are members. Kevin mentions the case of former Australian*



Asia Insurance Building (designed by Ng Keng Siang), Singapore. Photograph © Jeremy San Tzer Ning / Stzern Studio with permission.

*prisoners of war who mobilized to prevent the destruction of Changi prison: the Australian government became involved, and eventually a compromise was reached to preserve parts of the jail that date from World War II. After dinner, we visit the Asia Insurance Building, a beautiful 1954 structure in art deco style that was once the tallest building in Southeast Asia. Kevin's NGO had mobilized to prevent its destruction, and today it's the fancy Ascott Hotel, tastefully combining modern amenities with the original décor.*



Most significant, the government has loosened its hold on civil society. Perhaps the government has finally acknowledged that a vibrant associational life is the real secret to patriotism. The basic idea is that intermediary associations between the family and the state are essential for patriotism because they break down social isolation and allow people to cooperate and to discover common interests and values that may otherwise have gone unnoticed. As Tocqueville put it, associations are “large free schools,” where citizens “take a look at something other than themselves,”<sup>95</sup> and where political interests are stimulated and organizational skills enhanced. Such associations counter the disposition to give precedence to personal ends over the public interest and they lead to a broader sense of public spiritedness. Of course, civil society can also take nasty forms, as in Ku Klux Klan associations, but the Singaporean government has intervened to protect the liberal character of civil society. In one case, after a group of evangelical Christians resorted to dubious means to take over leadership of AWARE, a feminist NGO, the government lent implicit support to restoration of the previous leadership. In another case, the nominated MP Thio Li-Ann gave an inflammatory speech in Parliament arguing against a measure to decriminalize homosexual sodomy on the grounds that homosexuality is a “gender identity disorder,” and that anal sex was akin to “shoving a straw up your nose to drink.”<sup>96</sup> The measure failed to pass, but the government rarely if ever enforces the law against sodomy. Today, the gay scene in Singapore is one of the most vibrant in Asia. It’s as though the government recognizes the need to appease a deeply conservative constituency by means of legal forms, while turning a blind eye to behavior that doesn’t harm others.

*More talk at the hawker center with Beng Huat, who is known as one of Singapore’s most prominent liberal intellectuals. He says it’s better for kids to be brought up in a conservative environment, and once they grow up they can choose to live in a liberal society if they prefer. If they’re brought up in a liberal environment, with easy access to temptations such as drugs and activities that interfere with schoolwork, they may be damaged for life and, even if they get through it, they are not likely to appreciate the virtues of living in a conservative society. In other words, their choices as adults will be more limited. As the father of a sixteen-year-old son (and with memories of my own somewhat decadent teenage years, which I somehow managed to survive), I find myself agreeing with Beng Huat, and I’m happy that my son is being brought up in the relatively conservative atmosphere of Beijing. It also occurs to me that my son was conceived in Singapore, and that—as a Eurasian (to borrow Singaporean terminology) who speaks English and Mandarin and has a soft spot for high-quality food—he might actually “fit in” there later.*

I do not mean to imply that Singapore has become a liberal society. The government still takes harsh measures against those who disrupt social order, such as the famous case of the American teenager Michael Fay, who was sentenced to caning for theft and vandalism. It sends police to monitor the potted plants of Singaporean residents to ensure that they do not serve as breeding grounds for dengue fever—spreading mosquitoes. The death penalty is mandatory for possession of small amounts of drugs, and the police have the power to subject drug suspects to urine analysis. Such measures are not nearly so controversial in Singapore as they might be in Western countries (for example, 79 percent of Singaporeans strongly agree that criminals should be caned for serious offenses),<sup>97</sup> and they may simply reflect a different morally justifiable way of drawing the line between the competing goods of social order and individual freedom.

*September 2009. My friend and former colleague Chee Soon Juan comes to greet me at my Orchard Road hotel, and we exchange hugs. He is accompanied by his Taiwanese wife and three lovely children, who seem excited about hustle and bustle of downtown Singapore (Soon Juan tells me that his family rarely comes to Orchard Road). Soon Juan, who heads the opposition Singapore Democratic Party, has been jailed seven times for various political offenses that would be regarded as trivial in other developed countries. The following morning he is due to go on trial again, and may soon go to jail for an eighth time. (He declines an offer of my recent book on the grounds that it is too thin: he is allowed four books for every two weeks in jail; hence, the books must be thick or he will run out of reading material.) Soon Juan was once the most promising opposition candidate in Singapore, but the government's campaigns against him have taken a toll. Lawsuits launched against him by the Lee family and other top PAP officials have made him officially bankrupt, and therefore he cannot leave the island-state (he has not left for three years) or participate in the next elections. Yet he remains optimistic. I ask him if he feels attached to Singapore—personally, I would regard it as a prison sentence if I were barred from leaving the tiny island—and he says of course; it's his home. He worries about the effects of increased immigration on the sense of nationhood, citing the example of Singaporean schoolchildren who cheered for badminton players of an opposing school because their own team was composed of players from mainland China. He says that his struggles have contributed to some progress; for example, now it's possible to organize demonstrations at Speaker's Corner. He says the Web is free of political censorship (more free than in China, I think to myself) and he has dedicated activists to help with his party's website, which has become the most popular political party website in Singapore, with more than two million hits per month. His books are sold at two bookstores in Singapore (here too, greater freedom than in China). Still, I*

*can't help but feel sad. If he had been left alone by the government when I first knew him in 1992, I might be talking to the prime minister today.*

What hasn't changed in Singapore is the elite politics. It is still monopolized by the PAP and the domestic TV and print media still serve mainly as the mouthpiece for the government. (To be fair, coverage of opposition parties was less skewed in the run-up to the May 7, 2011 general election.) Yes, Singapore finds itself in a dangerous neighborhood, and the terrorist plot to attack Singapore embassies in 2001 serves as a useful reminder. Still, the government doesn't have to be so thin-skinned, nor do security concerns justify intimidating domestic and foreign critics using every means at the government's disposal. Nor does the government have to be so inhumane to those without social power, such as foreign domestic workers, who are treated far worse in Singapore than in Hong Kong.<sup>98</sup>

Upon my return to Beijing, I talk with my wife and she notices that I still get upset about politics in Singapore. We lived for eight years in the relatively open and civil political environment in Hong Kong, and I never did seem to care that much about political democratization in Hong Kong (in fact, I often sided with those who argued against rapid political democratization) or about Hong Kong politics more generally. So what is it about Singapore? My wife puts forward an unsettling idea: perhaps the occasional "big stick" increases attachment to the community. It gives people something to fight against, particularly if the stick is wielded by a well-known leader of a relatively small community. In a harmonious city like Stockholm, where things seem to go well, there is no reason for people to get so passionate about the fate of their community. If Montreal had been ruled by Lee Kuan Yew, perhaps I'd still be there struggling to improve it. If Singapore had been ruled by Hong Kong-style hands-off rulers, perhaps my public-spirited academic Singaporean friends would have moved to low-pressure cities like Melbourne, where they could live in fancy suburban homes with gardens. It's like being ruled by a stern father who is generally benign but occasionally cruel and irrational: the children are more likely to be attached—to be bound—by him than if they are ruled by an indifferent father who just lets the children go their own way (and admits substitute fathers). So here's my conclusion. I'd still like to think that the more democratic the society, the more the sense of patriotism—in the context of this book, the more democratic the city, the more the sense of civicism—but I'm less sure that the political reality corresponds to my ideals. Maybe the Spartans were just as patriotic as the Athenians?

## THE CITY OF MATERIALISM

*My friend Yick Wai-lun, then professor of political theory at the Hong Kong Polytechnic, first introduced me to Chinese culture. Wai-lun obtained a PhD in philosophy from Harvard and he did his thesis with John Rawls, perhaps the greatest liberal philosopher of the twentieth century. But Wai-lun became dissatisfied with liberalism; he said that you can have the right political institutions but people may still be leading bad lives. Hence, he turned to communitarianism, a political philosophy that could inspire concern with values such as communal well-being and social responsibility. I had similar ideas, and we both spent the academic year 1988–89 at McGill University studying with Charles Taylor, one of the “founding fathers” of communitarianism. Wai-lun seemed possessed by his hometown, Hong Kong. On the one hand, he was a sharp critic, fiercely denouncing the “shallow consumerism” of Hong Kong’s youth, the attention they devoted to fancy haircuts and fashionable clothing even when they lived in shabby public flats and could barely afford such “luxuries.” But when it came to Hong Kong–style Cantonese food, Wai-lun was a true Epicurean: he would spare no time or expense introducing me to the best of Cantonese cuisine in Montreal. The more time I spent with Wai-lun, the more fascinated I became with Hong Kong, and when I returned to Oxford to pursue my doctoral work I would go to Cantonese restaurants for take-away, secure in the knowledge that I could make relevant culinary distinctions. Shortly thereafter, I met a Chinese graduate student named Song Bing. We fell in love, and two months later I phoned Wai-lun to ask if he could help make arrangements for our wedding in Hong Kong. He seemed surprised but kindly offered his services. But there was no need to follow through with the plan; Bing and I married the following year in Oxford. We invited Wai-lun, of course, but he couldn’t attend, and he sent a couple of Cantonese cookbooks as a wedding gift. He died tragically of cancer the next year, and I never did get to see him again.*

The term *materialism* is pejorative in English. Applied to social life, it refers to people who care more about the accumulation of material goods than “higher” pursuits like religion, culture, politics, or philosophy. Needless to say,

such associations stem from the educated classes who create and refine our language, theorists such as John Stuart Mill, who denounced “lower” forms of happiness, saying that he’d rather be a sad Socrates than a happy pig. But perhaps it’s too easy for people with money to denounce the “materialism” of those working to secure the means of subsistence. And what if the “materialists” work hard with the aim of securing a stable future for their children and grandchildren? If it’s all work and no play, are they perhaps leading more other-regarding lives than what Maoists used to call “reactionary intellectuals”?

This chapter opens with a historical account of the development of modern Hong Kong. Hong Kong was a British colony from 1842 to 1997, and the strange part is that British rule was often regarded as a relatively benign form of colonialism, even though the British resorted to egregious practices such as institutionalized racism. A key explanation is that Hong Kongers regarded the alternatives to British rule as worse: they saw other rulers as likely to undermine Hong Kong’s economic prosperity.

Colonial Hong Kong became a global byword for the spirit of free enterprise, but the reality deviated substantially from the ideology. The second part of this chapter will explain the distinctive features of Hong Kong’s economy that allowed the government to maintain low tax rates. The key explanation is not low levels of spending on welfare, but rather the fact that the government derived much of its revenue from land sales. The British government also implemented a kind of welfarism that was accepted by the population partly because it resonated with widely shared Confucian values. After the handover to China, the government maintained and reinforced the key features of Hong Kong–style capitalism, despite fears of a “Communist takeover.”

The third part of the chapter will show that the ethos of materialism in Hong Kong is embedded in and constrained by Confucian values that prioritize care for family members and other communities over self-satisfaction. The capitalist ideology is still a source of pride that distinguishes Hong Kong from cities in mainland China, but Hong Kong–style capitalism is not founded on self-interest or hedonism.

#### COLONIALISM AND MONEYSMAKING

*I was happy to be offered a job teaching political philosophy at the University of Hong Kong in 1996, shortly before Hong Kong’s return to “the motherland.” The academic salaries were the highest in the world, and I was also offered a beautiful flat on Hong Kong Island overlooking the ocean. But I felt a bit embarrassed about the flat. Two of my colleagues from Hong Kong—friends from my Oxford days—were not eligible for the housing benefits, which were offered only to expatriates at*

*my (low) rank. My friends had to pay exorbitant rates for tiny flats, and could barely conceal their resentment when they visited my flat. The university recognized that such colonial privileges were unfair and planned to do away with them. The idea was to build more flats and give everybody access to subsidized university housing. But the economy nose-dived the following year and the university decided to equalize by downgrading the expatriates instead.*

Modern-day Hong Kong, as every Chinese person knows, had dubious origins. In 1839, the refusal by Qing dynasty authorities to allow the import of opium resulted in the First Opium War between China and Britain. China lost the war and it ceded Hong Kong Island to Britain in 1842. The colonizers were not particularly enthusiastic about their new prize—Lord Palmerston, the British foreign secretary at the time of possession, described Hong Kong as “a barren island with hardly a house on it.”<sup>1</sup> But the British rulers soon turned the island into a haven of free trade, with opium as the key commodity. Profits from the trade enriched the great British trading companies—Jardine Matheson, Hutchison Whampoa, and Swire—that would come to shape the economy in Hong Kong for subsequent decades. All three companies still have buildings that dominate Hong Kong’s skyline.

*In 1988, my wife-to-be, Song Bing, was among the first batch of students from mainland China to receive scholarships from the Swire group. With the handover to mainland China looming in ten years, Swire went out of its way to establish good ties with the mainland Chinese government, unlike Jardine, which moved its headquarters out of Hong Kong before the handover. Today, Swire has been rewarded with lucrative real estate deals in the mainland, including a luxury shopping complex in central Beijing.*

The Second Opium War was fought in 1856–60 and China lost again. The 1860 Convention of Peking legalized opium and ceded the Kowloon Peninsula to the British. The legalization was supported by John Stuart Mill in his classic text *On Liberty* on the grounds that Chinese people should have the freedom to buy the drug.<sup>2</sup> Along the same lines, the merchant William Jardine said that the drug is “not an evil, but a comforter for the Chinese people.”<sup>3</sup> Neither discussed the impact of the drug on family members of the addicted. By 1883, more than one-quarter of Hong Kong’s male Chinese population of 160,000 was estimated to be addicted to opium, along with a similar proportion in mainland China.<sup>4</sup> As revolutionaries in the mainland campaigned against opium, revenues in Hong Kong rose, accounting for nearly half of government revenues in 1918 and thus establishing the pattern that the relatively open economy of Hong

Kong benefits from restrictions in the mainland. But the British elite became concerned about the drug's impact as mass addiction beset American and European cities, and the drug was gradually phased out of Hong Kong's economy.

*Shortly after I arrived in Hong Kong, a colleague took me on a drive to Victoria Peak on Hong Kong Island, a stunning drive along a winding road. The higher you go, the more prestigious the real estate, and the old colonial homes at the peak command some of the world's highest prices.*

In the early twentieth century, Rudyard Kipling visited a taipan (head of an English firm) in Hong Kong and later wrote a paean to the wealth of colony, noting, "when I die I would be a Taipan at Hong Kong." But it was a segregated society, with institutionalized privileges for the foreigners (who never accounted for more than 5 percent of the population). Until 1870, Chinese manual laborers could not move at night without carrying lanterns and identity papers. And the only Chinese admitted to visit the residences at the peak were the servants of persons authorized by the governor. Even Kipling could sense the problems ahead, asking, "What will happen when China really wakes up, runs a line from Shanghai to Lhasa, starts another line of imperial Yellow Flag immigrant steamers, and really works and controls her own gun-factories and arsenals?"<sup>5</sup>

*My office at the University of Hong Kong was located in the main building, one of the few colonial buildings still standing in Hong Kong. On the weekends, fashion models and newlywed couples would often go there for photo shoots.*

A recent Chinese-language book on the first generation of Chinese architects in Hong Kong notes somewhat bitterly that although there were few foreign architects in the 1930s, they had political influence and therefore could easily get all the commissions in Hong Kong.<sup>6</sup> Yet many people in Hong Kong seem not to agonize much over the colonial past. In Beijing, the legacy of the "century of humiliation" at the hands of foreign powers, from the First Opium War till the Chinese Communist Party victory in 1949, still seems fresh in people's minds and helps to explain the resentful nationalism that often puzzles foreigners. But colonial resentment seems relatively tame in Hong Kong. What explains the Hong Kong "exception"? Western support for the anti-Qing Nationalist Revolution, which gave rise to a new republican government in the mainland in 1911, may have softened resentment. School textbooks that portrayed the British in a positive light also helped. Perhaps the land of Hong Kong made it more difficult for the conquerors to build major axes that could serve as daily reminders of colonial rule.<sup>7</sup> But I'd argue that other factors are more im-

portant, starting with the fact that some Chinese collaborated with the British and benefited economically from colonial rule.

China is a large country with sharp regional variations that are largely shaped by geography. Marie-Claire Bergère distinguishes “between the China of the South, looking out to the sea and dominated by forces of change and the China of the North, open to the steppes, symbol and refuge of the imperial ideology of hegemony and centralization.”<sup>8</sup> Revisionist historians now argue that enterprising southerners were willing to collaborate with foreign powers even before the British takeover of Hong Kong: “Research on the relation between South-east Asian business and the opium trade has uncovered evidence that . . . challenges the conventional convention of uni-directional imperialist intrusions. According to these studies, commercial contacts and cooperation among European merchants and the Chinese dated back to the eighteenth century, well-before the take-over of Hong Kong by the British.” Such collaboration may also help to explain why the British cared about the “barren rock” in first place: “When the Qing navy was defeated, Captain Charles Elliot, the British superintendent of trade, persuaded the Royal authorities to make the cession of Hong Kong Island a part of the requested compensation package. He argued that the British crown had an obligation to retain Hong Kong ‘as an act of justice and protection to the native population upon whom we have been so long dependent for assistance and supply.’”<sup>9</sup> The collaboration intensified once the British did take over. The seafaring Tankas provided pilots for colonizers and some grew rich from their collaboration with the British in the Opium Wars. Compradors (Chinese middlemen for European merchants) parlayed their positions as intermediaries in business and culture into new status and power. By 1858, sixty-five Chinese hongts (Chinese-owned trading companies) complemented the British elite trading companies.<sup>10</sup> The Chinese also began to compete directly in the opium trade, and Hong Kong served as the entrepôt for opium imported into China and exported to overseas Chinese communities in California, Australia, and elsewhere. The Hong Kong administration leased the local opium monopoly to a local trader, whose fee constituted a major source of government revenue for decades.

But most Chinese in British-ruled Hong Kong worked as poor manual laborers, and collaboration by a Chinese elite would not have been sufficient to soften resentment against the colonizers. Perhaps the key explanation for the apparent acquiescence with British rule is that the alternatives seemed even worse. Hong Kong is largely composed of immigrants who fled persecution in the mainland, and Hong Kong was viewed as a relative oasis of freedom from persecution and a land of economic opportunity. The first influx of refugees was prompted by the 1850 massacre by the Taipings in Nanjing. They were followed by reformist



intellectuals oppressed by the empress dowager and those fleeing the bloody struggles among warlords.<sup>11</sup>

The worst period in Hong Kong's history was the Japanese occupation in 1941–45. The Japanese had captured southern Chinese cities in the late 1930s, forcing massive waves of refugees into Hong Kong and doubling the territory's population to 1.6 million, with a half million sleeping in the streets. With the British tied down in Europe and elsewhere and no provisions to include Chinese in plans for defending the colony, the British and their allies folded quickly when the Japanese invaded. The British were interned in camps at Stanley (in the southern part of Hong Kong Island, now a tourist resort), and they lost the aura of invulnerability in the eyes of the local population.<sup>12</sup> The Japanese renamed streets and monuments to erase their British identities and took over colonial homes on Victoria Peak. But life (especially obtaining food) also grew harsher for the local population as Japan began to lose the war. For the first time in Hong Kong's history, there was massive emigration from the territory, and Hong Kong lost more than half of its population in the period between the Japanese invasion and Japan's surrender in 1945. After the surrender, Britain resumed sovereignty in Hong Kong, and Japanese goods and companies would not regain popularity in the colony for decades.<sup>13</sup>

*Back in Hong Kong for research, I ask about a Chinese-language academic bookstore named San Lian, and I'm told it's on Queen Victoria Street: the same queen who is depicted in the mainland Chinese film The Opium War as stating, "We must teach them a lesson in free trade." I notice that several of Hong Kong's main arteries are named after former British governors, and even the People's Liberation Army's building in Central Hong Kong is still referred to by locals as the Prince Charles building.*

In the post–World War II period, the British dismantled most forms of racial segregation and the Chinese had more opportunities for enrichment, which attracted hundreds of thousands of refugees from the mainland. Most refugees were fierce anti-Communists who fled the mainland in rickety boats, even swimming in shark-infested waters, to reach Hong Kong, the "city with streets paved of gold." Between 1945 and 1950, the population grew to 1.8 million, eventually swelling to more than five million in 1981 as refugees fled the famine that followed the Great Leap Forward and the insanity of the Cultural Revolution. Economically, the most influential refugees were the Shanghainese capitalists, including the father of Tung Chee-hwa, the first Chief Executive of Hong Kong after the return to the "motherland" in 1997. Their capital and know-how helped to propel Hong Kong's economic boom.

The largest-scale protest against British colonialism in Hong Kong took place in 1967, during the early days of the Cultural Revolution. Agitators inspired by Red Guards set off bombs and organized strikes and demonstrations against British imperialism. But the movement was short lived: most Hong Kongers were put off by the organized chaos, which killed fifty-one people. More unexpectedly, the Communist leaders in mainland China were not keen on the protests either: the Chinese premier Zhou Enlai himself reined in the protesters because Hong Kong was useful as a limited gateway to enable China to evade international boycotts.<sup>14</sup> China was not yet ready to resume sovereignty over Hong Kong.

In short, the British colonizers were not loved, but they didn't seem as bad as the Japanese invaders or the Chinese Communists. Such invidious comparisons help to explain the relative lack of colonial resentment in recent Hong Kong history. Even the pejorative Cantonese term *gweilo* (ghost) for "foreigner" has come to be appropriated by foreigners in Hong Kong as a self-appellation.<sup>15</sup> In 1982, Hong Kongers avidly followed the Falklands War, some hoping that the British would similarly rescue Hong Kong from the Communists in the future.<sup>16</sup> But it was not to be. Margaret Thatcher's efforts to retain Hong Kong beyond 1997—the expiry date of the treaty that leased the New Territories to Britain for ninety-nine years—were rebuffed by Deng Xiaoping. The British and the Chinese agreed to a treaty that would return Hong Kong to China in 1997 under the famous "one country, two systems" formula which guarantees that "the previous capitalist system and way of life shall remain unchanged for fifty years" (Hong Kong Basic Law, Article 5). Under that arrangement, China has control over defense and foreign policy, and Hong Kong can continue to manage its domestic affairs as though it were a separate economic entity. The treaty led to fears that Communist rule would lead to political oppression, fears that were magnified after the bloody crackdown against the Tiananmen Square protests on June 4th, 1989. Such fears led to an exodus from Hong Kong between 1984 and 1994, with about six hundred thousand Hong Kongers leaving for countries such as Canada and Australia.<sup>17</sup>

Nerves in Hong Kong were further rattled by British-Chinese tensions in the run-up to the handover. Under the stewardship of Percy Cradock, the British ambassador to the People's Republic, Britain had established a policy of cooperation with China on the grounds that Hong Kong's reversion to China was unavoidable and that confrontation would simply leave China a free hand. Cradock negotiated the 1984 Joint Declaration between China and Britain in Hong Kong, as well as the 1990 agreement on directly elected seats to the Legislative Council, which provided for partial democratization of Hong Kong.<sup>18</sup> But when Chris Patten was appointed governor in 1992, the British abandoned

this policy of cooperation, opting instead to push for faster democratization in Hong Kong, with or without Chinese agreement. Patten proposed changes that would have the effect of enfranchising almost the whole working population. Not surprisingly, China was suspicious of this last-minute conversion to democracy.<sup>19</sup> The Chinese objected strongly to Patten's plans, seeing them as a breach of previously agreed-on constitutional and political settlements. Chinese government officials were particularly incensed by the public nature of his proposals and the refusal of their request for private consultation before he went public. They made it explicit that Patten's reforms would be repealed if he proceeded unilaterally, but his reforms were still pushed through the Legislative Council. After the handover, the Chinese replied to Patten's proposals as promised: they disbanded Hong Kong's legislature and appointed a provisional legislature dominated by pro-China businessmen. Nonetheless, the mood in Hong Kong was largely positive due to the booming economy, with the stock market at an all-time high.

*The world's attention was focused on Hong Kong on July 1, 1997, the day of its historic handover to China. We lived in a large university flat on Pokfulam Road and several former students from Singapore, along with a friend from Canada, came to stay with us to witness the momentous event. But for me it turned out to be the biggest nonevent in recent history. I had a bit too much to drink and fell asleep before the fireworks display at midnight.*

A decade later, Hong Kong has an executive-led government headed by its Chief Executive, Donald Tsang, a former civil servant; the weak legislature consists of a mixture of directly elected seats and seats allocated to various interest groups, similar to the system under British rule before Chris Patten. There have been repeated calls in Hong Kong for direct elections of the chief executive and the legislature by universal suffrage, but such reforms have been deferred by the Chinese government until 2017 at the earliest.

*My son attended the Canadian International School from 1999 to 2003. More than 90 percent of students at the school were children of Hong Kong emigrants who had returned to Hong Kong once they had secured Canadian passports. According to one estimate, sixty out of every hundred Hong Kongers who left later returned, often after having established dual residency.<sup>20</sup>*

The good news is that fears of political oppression and widespread human rights violations proved to be unfounded. Notwithstanding stalled political re-

form, Hong Kong is still the freest territory in China. The rule of law in Hong Kong is the envy of mainlanders, the press is vibrant and critical, peaceful demonstrations proceed as before, academics write harsh denunciations of the status quo, and yearly commemorations of the June 4th killings still take place at Victoria Park.

Perhaps the relative success of the one country, two systems formula should not have come as a surprise. The mainland Chinese government has an incentive to refrain from political oppression because it wants to assuage fears in Taiwan about what would happen once (if) it is officially unified with the mainland (although the one country, two systems model is highly unpopular in Taiwan itself). Jiang Shigong argues that the one country, two systems idea is rooted in Confucian values such as rule by morality and filial piety (with the implication that exemplary persons should not venture too far from home) that justify a “hands-off” approach to the rule of outlying territories. The model was implemented in Tibet during the Qing dynasty and in the early days of Mao’s rule, and Jiang suggests that the same model can be used to govern Tibet in the future.<sup>21</sup> (The Dalai Lama’s proposal for Chinese rule is similar.) So the question is not why China has for the most part refrained from interfering with Hong Kong’s civil liberties after the handover, but rather why the one country, two systems model has yet to be exported beyond Hong Kong (and Macau).

What did happen after the handover—and here’s the real surprise—is that Hong Kong became more capitalist once the Communists took over.

#### A CAPITALIST CITY IN A COMMUNIST COUNTRY

*For urbanites like me, the best view in the world is Hong Kong’s skyline. The view from Kowloon of Hong Kong Island, with its skyscrapers across the harbor competing for height advantage and Victoria Peak in the background, is nothing short of breathtaking. Two of the most visible buildings—the architect Norman Foster’s headquarters building of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank and I. M. Pei’s Bank of China (both of which appear on Hong Kong’s currency)—crowd out the tiny political buildings nearby (the Legislative Council Building and the former Governor’s House), as though to symbolize the power of capital over politics. The buildings are lit up with company logos and the scene is even more spectacular during the Western and Chinese New Year’s celebrations, when the buildings put on light shows (the better the economy, the more spectacular the light shows). Who can object to capitalism in the midst of such manmade beauty?<sup>22</sup> Even the “losers” have nothing to be ashamed of.<sup>23</sup> In April 2009, I notice that the AIG logo is still prominently displayed on the company’s building, unlike company headquarters in New York,*



Hong Kong skyline, with the Legislative Council building dwarfed by nearby commercial buildings. Photograph © Leungchopan. Courtesy of Shutterstock.

*where shame about AIG's near bankruptcy and multibillion-dollar tax-funded bailout, and public anger about tax-funded bonuses to its executives, caused AIG take down its logo.*

Colonial Hong Kong became a global byword for the spirit of free enterprise. Even more than Reagan's America or Thatcher's Britain, the territory was touted as the paradigmatic case of a laissez-faire economy favored by neoclassical economists. As Milton Friedman put it, "To see how the free market really works, Hong Kong is the place to go."<sup>24</sup> There is some truth to this view. The colonial government firmly opposed the idea that taxpayers' money should be used to subsidize unprofitable firms and sunset industries (or to bail out banks). There was no general sales tax or capital gains tax, and Hong Kong was perhaps the world's easiest place to register companies (even political parties, to this day, register as companies). There were no tax holidays, tariff incentives, antitrust or fair competition laws, or privileged access to transportation facilities designed to lure foreign investors. There were no public pensions, child allowances, maximum working hours law, or unemployment insurance. Most of these features have been maintained since the handover to China in 1997, and the Heritage Foundation, a U.S.-based conservative think tank, continues to rank Hong Kong's economy as the freest in the world.<sup>25</sup>

The most widely celebrated feature of Hong Kong's economy, the strikingly low tax rates, requires some background explanation. Libertarians abroad look with envy on Hong Kong's tax rates, but a closer examination of the "Hong Kong system" might temper this enthusiasm.<sup>26</sup> In 1996, just before the handover, profits of corporations in Hong Kong were taxed at 16.5 percent, and salaries were taxed at a maximum of 15 percent. Moreover, there were many generous personal allowances under Hong Kong tax law, with the effect that 53 percent of the territory's workforce did not pay any income tax. The main explanation for the low tax rates—which have been further lowered since the handover—is not low welfare spending. One important reason is that Hong Kong does not have to support a defense industry (one of the advantages of being a colony and a "special administrative zone" of sovereign overlords). The most crucial explanation, however, lies in the fact that the government does not rely solely on direct taxation for its revenue.

*My first year in Hong Kong was memorable. Every weekend, I'd travel with my wife, child, and friends to a different park, island, or beach. Hong Kong is not a city in a strict sense: 40 percent of the land is set aside for country parks, recreation, and environmental preservation and only 17 percent of the land is actually built on.<sup>27</sup>*

*Hong Kong is one-third less densely populated than neighboring Macau, the “small” town next door.<sup>28</sup> The urban area of Hong Kong consists of the land that is set aside by the government for development.*

The Hong Kong government actually derives about 30 percent of its revenue from land sales.<sup>29</sup> The territory’s land is legally owned by the government—what Ling-hin Li terms a “socialist land tenure system”—and the government fills its coffers by selling long-term leases, ranging from 75 to 999 years, to developers.<sup>30</sup> The higher the price of land, the greater the government’s revenue. The government, in other words, has an interest in maintaining high property values—among the highest in the world—if it is to maintain its policy of low taxation. It does this by carefully controlling the amount of land that is released for sale: if land were to be released too quickly, property values would be reduced and the government’s revenue would be affected. It is, of course, those buying new homes and renting from the private sector who pay the price for this policy. Many Hong Kongers live in tiny spaces, and the need to pay astronomical residential property prices is widely viewed as an indirect form of taxation.

Most government land is sold in a competitive bidding process to three real estate developers: Henderson Land, Sun Hung Kai Properties, and Cheung Kong. These developers sit on huge tracts of land, drip-feeding apartments onto the market so as to maintain high property prices. Between 1992 and 1996, the number of units sold each year by the big three developers decreased, prices increased fourfold, and profits doubled. Meanwhile, potential new entrants to the market are restricted by the huge cost of paying land-conversion premiums that are the bedrock of government revenues. In the ten years since the handover, the positions controlled by property tycoons on advisory and statutory bodies have increased threefold.<sup>31</sup>

The handover has not severed ties between the government and big developers. In fact, the Chinese government aligned itself with the developers when China first prepared for the handover in the 1980s. At the time, Chinese officials felt uncertain whether locals would support a reversion of sovereignty. Xu Jiatusun, then serving as Beijing’s top man in Hong Kong, explained in his memoirs that a general fear of the end of the world prevailed and that everyone wanted to flee with their money (Xu himself defected to the United States in 1990). In response, China adopted the strategies of pumping investment into the territory and aligning itself with local capitalists, steps that were seen as necessary to maintain Hong Kong’s economic viability. To earn the support of corporate bosses, the Chinese government organized timely interventions on behalf of Hong Kong companies. In one notorious example, the Bank of China helped to save the Tung Shipping Group and its public arm, Orient Overseas,

from collapse. The president of Tung Shipping was Tung Chee-hwa, who was appointed chief executive of the Hong Kong government after the handover. China also reached out to many onetime enemies when forming advisory bodies to lay down policies for post-British Hong Kong. Members of the powerful Preparatory Committee, for example, included nearly all of Hong Kong's twenty richest people.

*In 1999, having lost the right to university housing, we rented a flat in lower Baguio Villa on Hong Kong Island. There was a good view of the ocean, but I couldn't stand to spend any time there during the day. My reveries were interrupted by the sound of loud drilling—local wits refer to the noise of the jackhammer as Hong Kong's national anthem—because the Cyberport project was being created out of nothing just below our apartment. Originally meant to be Hong Kong's "Silicon Valley," the government abandoned plans to turn it into a high-tech park after the collapse of Internet companies' stocks in the real Silicon Valley. So the whole project ended up as a special favor for Richard Li, the chairman of the telecommunications and information technology giant PCCW and son of the billionaire property tycoon Li Ka-shing. Richard Li was given special access to an expensive piece of premium land by the government for development without having to go through the usual bidding process.*

It should come as no surprise that the ties between the government and the property developers have not been severed since the handover. Quite the contrary: the government has intervened in the economy whenever the core interests of the developers are at stake. One highly publicized example is its intervention in the stock market in 1998, when billions of taxpayers' dollars were used to buy the stocks of major blue-chip companies, most of which have substantial property interests (the Hong Kong government was widely criticized at the time, but the intervention was successful at stabilizing the stock market and arguably set a model for the U.S. government's intervention ten years later). An intervention more clearly designed to boost property prices "is the ceasing of the Home Ownership Scheme in 2003, one of the major public housing programmes which targeted the marginal income group sandwiched by the middle and lower classes. This attempt at stabilizing private housing market prices has an effect of protecting the interests of the big property developers."<sup>32</sup>

But who really believes that capitalism is about an open and competitive market where talent and hard work alone determine the economic winners? To the extent that the Chinese Communists are inspired by Marxism,<sup>33</sup> they should view the state in a capitalist society as an organization that serves the interests of the capitalist class: "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for



managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie” (Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*). In that sense, the Communists are faithfully implementing the capitalist model in Hong Kong, just as they promised. Additionally, one might expect cozy arrangements between big business and government to be even cozier in small territories. As the distinguished American sociologist Daniel Bell (no relation) put it: “I always assume—this is the latent Marxism in me—that when sizable fortunes are built in a small city-state, it is because of an interlocking arrangement between the oligarchies and the government.”<sup>34</sup>

Still, it could be argued that Hong Kong provides a more level playing field for enrichment than Singapore does, where the Lee family holds political power and controls the key levers of the economy (see the chapter on Singapore). And the end of colonialism has equalized opportunities by ending political patronage for British interests that was so conspicuous during colonial rule. The British corporation Cable and Wireless held the local telephone monopoly until 1995, and its international call monopoly franchise was ended after the handover. All the buses in the city were made, in the words of the Hong Kong real estate tycoon Ronnie Chan, “by a British company almost unknown anywhere else in the world.”<sup>35</sup> Cathay Pacific, then owned mainly by Swire, held all landing rights at the Hong Kong airport. In colonial times, British workers had the automatic right to work in Hong Kong.<sup>36</sup> And collusion between British big business and the government was endemic: “The chairmen of Hong Kong Bank and a few major British companies sat on the highest governmental body of Hong Kong, the Executive Council. They always received policy and other important information first and easily acted on them, while the local Chinese businessmen were left to be second class citizens. In business, time is money—you get information first and you win. How clean or fair is that?” Of course, what seems like the opening of markets and social institutions with fair participation for all may simply mask the appearance of a new Chinese elite. But Chinese economic interests in Hong Kong are not monolithic: various “red capitalists” jockey for position and influence in Hong Kong. Chan claims, “When one compares the situation before and after 1997, the HKSAR government [the post-handover government of Hong Kong] did much more [to remove itself] from the business community.”<sup>37</sup>

In short, Hong Kong has become more capitalist since the handover in the sense that the playing field has become more level for Chinese business owners and managers, and perhaps more level for capitalists in general. If so, such developments should be viewed as desirable corrections of the distortions of colonial rule. But Hong Kong’s “transition to capitalism” also has a darker side: since the handover, there has been a steady erosion of social welfare rights and the gap between rich and poor has substantially increased.

*I was brought up in a humble middle-class home in Montreal, and I never would have dreamed that I'd end up as the employer of a domestic worker. But that's what happened when I moved to Hong Kong. There is no state-sponsored day care and most middle-class and professional families hire foreign domestic workers to help with housework and child rearing: in 2008, there were more than 251,000 foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong,<sup>38</sup> mainly from Indonesia and the Philippines (another legacy of the colonial days). We hired a live-in helper to assist with caring for our young child. After the handover to China, the minimum wage for domestic workers, perhaps the worst-off workers in the territory, was cut twice by the Hong Kong government in response to pressure from political parties and employers' interest groups. Both my wife and I had stable jobs and we could afford to maintain the "colonial" rates, but many Hong Kong employers suffering from economic difficulties cut the wages of their domestic employees.*

The most distinctive part of Hong Kong's social welfare system is its housing policy launched in 1953, following the Shek Kip Mei squatter fire that made fifty-three thousand people homeless. The government responded by providing homes for the fire victims in resettlement blocks.<sup>39</sup> Government-subsidized housing was radically expanded by Murray MacLehose, the first diplomat with a socialist background sent to the colony.<sup>40</sup> One year after assuming the governorship in 1972, Lord MacLehose launched a public housing program that was meant to provide permanent public rental housing for the 1.8 million people still living in squatter huts or temporary housing. Fortunately, it was the start of Hong Kong's economic boom and the government had a lot of money to spend, though the economic recession of the mid-1970s frustrated many of the plans to achieve a fair and caring society. By the time of the handover, the Housing Authority was the largest landlord in the world. More than three million Hong Kongers, or 52 percent of the population, lived in subsidized housing, mainly rental flats from the Housing Authority with rents set at one-fifth the market level (the rest bought subsidized flats under various home-ownership schemes, with prices discounted 50 percent from those in the private sector).

*As a Canadian, I always took great pride in our health care system, which secures free health care for all our citizens, the sort of system that Americans could only dream about. But we still have to pay market rates for medicine prescribed by doctors. In Hong Kong, to my surprise, not only was health care nearly free but prescription drugs were also heavily subsidized!*

Beyond public housing, Hong Kong also had several of the standard features of welfare states in Western Europe. There was an excellent public health care

system, with the government paying 97 percent of the costs (private hospitals actually went out of business because they couldn't compete). Hong Kong had an affordable and efficient public transportation system that covered nearly every nook and cranny of the territory (the buses and subways are technically privately owned, but the government has substantial equity in most transportation companies and it has the power to make or break companies by granting franchises and monopolized routes). In addition, a 100 percent tax on new cars strongly encourages use of public transportation. The large majority of primary and secondary schools were either free or heavily subsidized, and the territory's eight tertiary educational institutions received nearly all their funding from the public coffers. The government provided flat-rate allowances for vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and the disabled, and means-tested aid to raise the incomes of individuals and families to a level at which basic and "special" needs (including spectacles and dentures) could be met. Colonial Hong Kong even provided some welfare aid "with Chinese characteristics": in accordance with the traditional Confucian norm of filial piety, taxpayers received allowances for taking care of elderly parents at home.

In the last six years of the colonial government, welfare spending increased at a real, inflation-adjusted rate of at least 10 percent annually and the government boosted spending on the environment by 60 percent, leading many businesspeople to worry that Hong Kong was heading for welfare statehood. The fact of the matter, however, is that Hong Kong already was a big spender on welfare: in 1995–96, Hong Kong's government devoted 47 percent of its public expenditure to social services, more than Singapore and Taiwan and only slight less than the United Kingdom.<sup>41</sup>

But these welfare achievements have been undermined by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its allies in Hong Kong's business community. In the build-up to the handover, the CCP consistently opposed the expansion of social and economic rights in Hong Kong. One of the last acts of the outgoing legislature was to pass five laws significantly boosting workers' rights in Hong Kong, including one that gives unions the right to use collective bargaining to negotiate workers' salaries and another that protects workers against unfair dismissal for taking part in union activities. These laws were immediately condemned as dangerous by the chairman of the Federation of Hong Kong Industries, Henry Tang Ying-yen, who was appointed to Tung Chee-hwa's executive council. Following the handover, the Beijing-appointed Provisional Legislature voted to suspend those laws, with the exception of two relatively trivial ones that increased compensation for victims of occupational deafness and declared May 1 a legal holiday.

Chinese suspicions of British intentions may have played a role: new welfare initiatives by the Hong Kong government were perceived as part of a British plot to denude the Hong Kong treasury of money and leave the territory in disarray with mounting debts. But the post-handover government was actually left with huge cash hoards (more than U.S. \$46 billion in fiscal reserves, with an estimated surplus of U.S. \$18 billion in 2010–2011). Some opposition may have been driven by political concerns: much of the impetus for increases in welfare spending came from prodemocracy parties in the legislature that were opposed to Chinese rule. But the main explanation for the CCP's antiwelfarism was its strategic alliance with Hong Kong's business class.

After the handover, social welfare was further cut back as economic conditions took a turn for the worse. Hong Kong was hit by three major economic crises, and the territory was the worst economic performer in East Asia between 1997 and 2007.<sup>42</sup> Even for a territory used to the "creative destruction" of capitalism (including a one-day drop in the Hang Seng index from around 1700 to 450 in 1973), the apparent collapse of the "economic miracle" came as a shock. It was tempting to blame the "takeover" of the Communist Chinese, as the U.S. senator Alfonse D'Amato put it, but Hong Kong's unlucky streak was actually rooted in a clause in the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration restricting the annual lease of land to fifty hectares. As Yun-wing Sun explains, "The clause was inserted by China to forestall a possible pre-emptive attempt on the part of the departing British colonial administration to lease excessive amounts of land, leaving too little land for the post-1997 HKSAR government. The clause was inserted to ensure a smooth transition. Ironically, it led to a huge real estate bubble, which proved to be a most destabilizing factor in Hong Kong's reversion."<sup>43</sup> The bubble burst when Hong Kong was hit by the Asian financial crisis in late 1997, and it would have burst whoever the rulers happened to be.

*Before I came to Hong Kong, I typically read the political news and the sports pages and threw out the rest of the newspaper. But my preferences changed. For one thing, my academic friends in Hong Kong spent much of their time talking about real estate and the stock market. And it soon became obvious that those seeking to understand politics in Hong Kong must begin by reading the business pages. By early 1998, I was an avid follower of the stock market, and I'd follow the ups and downs of the Hang Seng index on my office computer in my spare time. Finally, in February 1998, I decided that the markets had overreacted with pessimism and I invested thirty thousand U.S. dollars in various stocks. I made fourteen thousand dollars in one month and prided myself on having successfully predicted the bottom of the market. I told my friends that serious investors can make money if they have a basic*

*understanding of economics, people's psychology, and international politics. Eventually, I ended up losing my gains (and more). And since moving to Beijing, I rarely read the business pages and I let my wife take care of family finances.*

After regional currencies collapsed in the early days of the Asian financial crisis, currency speculators attacked the Hong Kong dollar. The Hong Kong government, however, could not afford to devalue the dollar: the local currency had been pegged to the U.S. dollar for the previous fourteen years, and the peg provided an important source of stability. Removing the pegged exchange rate would have undermined the credibility of the Hong Kong government (after multiple assurances that the peg was “sacred”) and could have led to massive capital flight. The government, however, had to pay a severe price for defending the currency. It spent billions of dollars of Hong Kong’s reserves battling speculators, and it raised interest rates to sky-high levels to protect the value of the Hong Kong dollar. High interest rates decimated Hong Kong’s property sector, and since seven out of ten listed companies in Hong Kong invest in property, the stock market took a nosedive. Hong Kong had five consecutive quarters of negative growth, and the brief boom fueled by the tech bubble in 1999–2000 was followed by a second recession.

As elsewhere, Hong Kong experiences increased hardship when the economy nose-dives. Keynesian economics would prescribe increasing spending to boost the economy and provide more social welfare for the needy. But the Hong Kong government did the opposite: it tightened expenditure, including slashing welfare benefits for families of three and four by 10 and 20 percent, respectively, and forcing more than twenty thousand jobless people to do community work or lose their benefits.<sup>44</sup> For the business community, however, it sweetened the pot by cutting the corporate tax rate to 16 percent. Such measures were justified in Hong Kong by the probusiness conservative ideology of fiscal management, which favored balanced budgets, an ideology that was codified in Article 107 of the Basic Law, the miniconstitution of Hong Kong. But the government still ran a deficit budget for a few years, mainly because revenue, particularly from land sales, dropped substantially.<sup>45</sup> Not surprisingly, the Gini index that measures income inequality rose from 0.518 in 1996 to 0.525 in 2001, ranking the city below only sixteen developing countries in South America and Africa.<sup>46</sup> In 2010, the U.N. Development Program reported that Hong Kong had the widest rich-poor gap among the thirty-eight “very high human development” economies it had studied. An even more alarming statistic is that 30 percent of Hong Kongers now earn less than in 1996 (even though GDP rose by 34 percent during that same period), with nearly 20 percent of the population living below the poverty line, including one-third of Hong Kong’s elderly residents.<sup>47</sup> Ming

Chan summarizes the effect of the economic downturns on different social groups: “During the first post-handover decade, while many middle-class elements were reduced to negative-equity homeowners, the working class endured the pains of reduced wages and unemployment, and the disadvantaged suffered severe reductions in welfare benefits and public assistance due to budget deficits. . . . In contrast, the tycoon-dominated economic upper echelon managed to grow by leaps and bounds, in part due to their high-yield investments in property development and other lucrative undertakings in mainland China.”<sup>48</sup>

*Shortly after the handover, the Hong Kong government announced plans to cut funding for higher education by 10 percent over the next three years, followed by another 10 percent cut after that. By 2003, our department meetings were mainly about how to cut spending and who were going to lose their jobs. In February, I had to rush back to Montreal because my father’s respiratory ailment—which had never been properly diagnosed—had taken a sudden turn for the worse; he was no longer able to breathe. He died on March 8. Upon my return to Hong Kong, I was informed that my salary would be docked by ten thousand Hong Kong dollars (the university had no provisions for paid leave following the death of an employee’s parent). On March 11, Hong Kong reported an outbreak of a mysterious respiratory disease, and the territory soon became the epicenter of the SARS epidemic. Few dared venture outside without a mask, and people were dying in nearby buildings. At least, I thought to myself, SARS kills people faster than whatever had afflicted my father. Over the next four months, SARS infected 1,750 people in Hong Kong, causing 299 deaths.*

Unemployment rose from 2.2 percent in 1997 to 8.3 percent in 2003, the highest figure since 1981, and housing prices reached historic lows in the dark days of the SARS outbreak. But the spread of the disease ended just as suddenly as it had started, and Hong Kong resumed another good economic run, helped by the weak U.S. dollar and various measures taken by the PRC’s central government to boost the Hong Kong economy, such as increasing tourism from the mainland. By May 2007, Hong Kong’s stock prices were setting new records, restaurants were bustling, unemployment had dropped to 3 percent, real estate prices had recovered to their 1997 levels, and it seemed that Hong Kong had finally resumed its status as a “dragon economy.” But the good times did not last long, as Hong Kong was soon battered by another financial crisis triggered by the bursting of a housing bubble in the United States in 2008. Given Hong Kong’s dependence on finance and services, the city is particularly vulnerable to external shocks, and it was badly hit by the most severe global financial crisis since the 1930s.<sup>49</sup>

In April 2009, Hong Kong's chief executive Donald Tsang said that the city's economy faced its biggest challenge since World War II. How will it deal with the challenge? And can the state avoid further cutbacks to social welfare? Even public housing for the needy can no longer be taken for granted: public expenditure on housing as a percentage of total government expenditure was cut from 3.68 in 1999–2000 to 1.52 in 2004–5, with the government retreating “to a much narrower and more limited housing policy, leaving the ground clear for the private sector. . . . The changes amount, in fact, to a significant residualisation of government responsibility in housing.”<sup>50</sup> Can disadvantaged Hong Kongers cope with the suffering? One might expect the society to be splitting apart, with the economic “losers” hitting the streets and intellectuals questioning the whole idea of maintaining capitalism as a “way of life.”

*April 6, 2009. As I step out of the MTR stop at Admiralty, my way is blocked by a group of domestic workers protesting cuts to their salaries. Their chants are led by a university professor who has written a pamphlet on the rights of domestic workers. A few minutes later, in front of Hong Kong's Hongkong and Shanghai Bank of China building, I run into middle-class demonstrators protesting against bank gambles that caused huge losses to their portfolios. The police block off the streets for a few minutes, but the protesters are largely ignored by the passers-by; I seem to be the only one paying any attention. Later that evening, I have dinner with an old friend. He has just launched a hedge fund at what might appear to be the worst possible time. But he's optimistic; he expects that the crisis will soon blow over. Property prices haven't collapsed as they did in 1997, the banks are well capitalized (mortgage rules in Hong Kong are stricter than in many other jurisdictions; for example, mortgages cannot be issued for more than 70 percent of the property's value),<sup>51</sup> and the low rate of taxation is still Hong Kong's big draw. His wife criticizes the government for giving small one-year grants to help university students cope with the downturn (I had recently returned from Denmark, where students went on strike because the government had proposed cutting from six years to four years the free grants of about one thousand U.S. dollars per month that are offered to all young adults).*

One recent survey found that Hong Kongers harbor more consistently anti-welfare attitudes than their counterparts in the United Kingdom: for example, the large majority oppose unemployment insurance unless the recipients are actively looking for work. The survey found that Hong Kongers uphold “Confucian values” that favor self-reliance and a strong work ethic.<sup>52</sup> Even progressive intellectuals in Hong Kong are skeptical of the idea that people are “naturally”

entitled to welfare from the state. Joseph Chan has put forward a model of social welfare grounded in Confucian values that prioritize the family as key to the good life: welfare responsibility lies first with the family, the local community serves as the second tier of help, and the state plays the role of last resort, providing direct help to people who cannot help themselves and lack adult family members to turn to.<sup>53</sup> Betty Yung argues that the Confucian ideal of social justice involves a private-property market economy, but with government control over the distribution of land and government aid to reduce the suffering of the people, especially in times of disaster.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps the longer-lasting aspects of social welfare policy in colonial times, such as the provision of public housing to those victimized by natural disasters, were effective because they cohered with such beliefs.<sup>55</sup> In the post-handover era, the privatization of housing and other policies such as means testing in housing subsidies and abolition of the right to inherit public-housing tenancies may also be “in line with the spirit of the Chinese conception of justice.”<sup>56</sup> So perhaps it’s a mistake to promote the ideal that the government should provide for people’s fundamental needs largely by means of free services to all, regardless of family or social circumstances. Such an ideal may be appropriate in Northern European countries, given their particular histories and cultures, but not necessarily in Hong Kong. Murray MacLehose may have been Hong Kong’s most caring governor, but he was still on the wrong side of history. It’s not that Hong Kongers don’t care about the needy; they just don’t believe that state welfare is always, or even usually, the best way of securing their interests. Not only will excessive state welfare damage economic growth, but also there are alternative ways of securing the interests of the needy that make use of (and do not undermine) valued family and social relationships. In that sense, perhaps, Hong Kong’s deepening of the “capitalist system and way of life” since the handover to the Chinese Communists may be consistent with Hong Kong’s dominant ethos.

And why worry so much about the ups and downs of capitalism, even if the roller-coaster ride has become more unnerving since the handover?<sup>57</sup> Hong Kong is composed largely of immigrants who fled the chaos of mainland China seeking a better life; they’re not about to throw in the towel at the first sign of an economic downturn. Yes, the manufacturing sector has been almost entirely transferred to Guangdong province (where labor and land are cheaper), and Hong Kong may be losing its comparative advantage to modernizing cities such as Shanghai and Shenzhen.<sup>58</sup> But Hong Kong does have one factor that gives it an edge: the world’s strongest work ethic. That’s the real secret to maintaining Hong Kong’s capitalist system and way of life. As a recent Hong Kong government report put it, “Hong Kong is known for its resilient, hard-working spirit



and will endeavor to turn crisis into opportunity.<sup>59</sup> But who can guarantee that the “hard-working spirit” will last?

#### MATERIALISM WITHOUT HEDONISM

*Walking the streets of Mongkok, I feel tense. The streets are packed with people, mainly unsmiling,<sup>60</sup> walking fast and talking loudly on cell phones, each one busily doing his or her own thing, in the midst of street markets and small stores, with elderly residents hanging clothes from the top floors of tall buildings. Flashing neon signs protrude in all possible directions (in Chinese, characters can be written horizontally or vertically, and commercial establishments make full use of the language’s versatility), air conditioners leak on passers-by, and double-decker buses narrowly miss pedestrians, who sprint across the street the second the light turns green. Tired and hot, I pop into a restaurant for a break. The restaurant is located on the third floor of a mixed-use building. I get into an elevator and immediately press the close button, a habit I’ve picked up in Hong Kong (in relatively easygoing Montreal, by contrast, many of the elevators do not even have close buttons).*

Mongkok (located in Kowloon, on the mainland part of Hong Kong) is the world’s most densely populated place, with 130,000 residents per square kilometer,<sup>61</sup> not counting the illegal immigrants and throngs of visiting shoppers. By objective measures, it should be at the bottom of most estimates of human well-being. Recent research has demonstrated that the increased “cognitive load” of being in a city triggers lapses in attention and memory, negatively affects mood, and interferes with self-control. In one recent study, people who had walked through the streets of downtown Ann Arbor, Michigan, were in a worse mood and scored lower on a test that involved repeating a series of numbers backward compared to others who took a stroll in an arboretum.<sup>62</sup>

*An administrator friend at the University of Hong Kong has recently returned from a vacation in Australia. I ask about her vacation. She enjoyed herself, but she’s glad to be back. Australia is “too spacious,” she explains.*

Yet somehow it seems to work in Hong Kong. At the street level, there is an underlying order to the fragmented and disconnected forms: the term “structured turbulence,” as Peter Cookson Smith notes, “is an apt description of the Hong Kong streetscape.”<sup>63</sup> For one thing, the city has remarkably low crime rates: even Mongkok, reputed to be one of the centers of triad activity in Hong Kong, is safe for single women walking alone late at night. Alcoholism and drug addiction are rare. The life expectancy of Hong Kongers is sixth highest in the

world: seventy-nine for men, and eighty-five for women.<sup>64</sup> And far from seeking to escape their urban culture, Hong Kongers often seek to recreate it when they immigrate abroad: Chinatowns in cities such as New York and Toronto approximate the frenetic environment of Hong Kong's streets to the extent possible within more highly regulated urban environments.

*Hong Kong's tallest building is the eighty-eight-story Two International Finance Center, designed to house financial institutions.<sup>65</sup> According to the company website, the building "culminates in a sculptural crown that celebrates the height of the tower reaching to the sky,"<sup>66</sup> but everybody I've talked to in Hong Kong tells me it's supposed to look like a hand grasping for money.*

The secret to the "structured turbulence" in Hong Kong is not mysterious. Everybody is busy doing one thing: making money. People work hard to make money, and densely populated urban environments make communication and exchange easier.<sup>67</sup> Yes, the packed living environment reflects policy decisions as well as the limits of building on hilly terrain. But it also reflects what most people care about: who wants to waste time traveling from suburbs to the workplace?

*As a young kid in Montreal, I looked forward to seeing my wealthy grandparents. My grandfather ran a children's clothing factory named after my designer grandmother. I enjoyed being with them, and I enjoyed the fancy restaurants. But my grandfather's cars were a source of embarrassment to me: he came to pick me up in gold Lincoln Continentals and flashy white Cadillacs. On the way out of my neighborhood, I'd fake a stomachache and bend down so my working-class and immigrant friends wouldn't see me in those cars. Twenty-five years later, an academic colleague in Hong Kong offers to sell me his BMW. It's fourteen years old, but it still looks impressive. I never would have dreamed of owning a BMW, but everyone around me seems to own a Mercedes or a BMW. I buy it with pleasure.*

A famous anecdote about Hong Kong is that a rich man parks his Rolls Royce in the poorest neighborhood and he is immediately surrounded by admiring people (in poor parts of American cities, the story goes, the car would be vandalized). The point of the anecdote, of course, is to suggest that there is little resentment against the rich in Hong Kong. Everybody works hard, and differences between people are not so pronounced (the billionaires of Hong Kong are rarely praised for their ability), so the winners are just luckier than most. Why feel resentful against the lucky? It makes no more sense than resenting the winners at Hong Kong's Jockey Club. A little jealousy, maybe, but no resentment,

certainly not to the point of wanting to harm the lucky winner. Next time, or next generation, it will be somebody else's turn to win.<sup>68</sup>

*My family is invited for lunch at the Hong Kong Jockey Club by one of Hong Kong's most successful corporate lawyers. Though our host hired my wife many years ago, the conversation does not touch on work. We have a delicious dim sum meal, finishing every scrap of food as our host's wife explains that she never leaves any food on her plate (in contrast, I'm reminded of a wealthy American friend who tells me that he always leaves something over to remind himself that he's not eating out of necessity). She notes that Hong Kong never had a landed aristocracy, which helps to explain the lack of high culture as well as the more egalitarian work ethic. Our host worries that the new generation is losing the work ethic and can-do spirit that powers the Hong Kong way of life (my teenage son replies that our generation should be criticized for ruining the environment and contributing to global warming).*

A famous statistic from Hong Kong is that it has more Rolls Royces per capita than any other city. What does that tell us about the Hong Kong work ethic? Hong Kongers are supposed to work hard rather than play hard, so why are they spending money on brand names and luxury goods? Does it mean that Hong Kongers are losing the drive that makes their community so economically successful, that they are turning into self-indulgent hedonists who care more about playing hard than working hard?

One reason Hong Kongers care about fancy cars is that their apartments are so small: they must show off wealth in other ways, such as buying fancy cars. And it doesn't mean that people are self-indulgent hedonists. In fact, the whole idea of showing off wealth is more other-regarding: the aim is to influence what others think rather than to experience pleasure oneself, except as a by-product of having influenced what others think.<sup>69</sup> Plus Hong Kongers do not spend extravagantly, the personal savings rate is still high and the government's reserves are among the world's highest. It's as though Hong Kongers spend just enough to keep the wheels of capitalism turning, and no more than that.

Still, things do change. The great Islamic thinker Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) proposed a theory explaining the fall of dynasties that may also foretell Hong Kong's future. According to Khaldun, *asabiyah* (group feeling), the tribal loyalty that makes the individual devote himself to the tribe, is the key to political power. The stronger the attachment to the tribe, the more the tribe is capable of fighting and conquering others: "It should be known that since . . . desert life no doubt is the reason for bravery, savage groups are braver than others. They are, therefore, better able to achieve superiority and to take away the things that are

in the hands of other nations.”<sup>70</sup> Eventually, however, nomadic conquerors will succumb to the temptations of luxurious city life, and that is the beginning of the end. The once brave nomads become soft, flabby, and docile toward outsiders, and the dynasty eventually falls to new tribes bound by strong *asabiyah*. In the case of Hong Kong, the brave nomads from the mainland are dying out. As the immigrant experience recedes from collective memory it won’t have the same motivational power, and elders worry that the next generation may be succumbing to the temptations of luxurious city life. But is the *asabiyah* that binds Hong Kongers really weakening? Or is it getting stronger?

*The Qingming Festival, or Tomb-Sweeping Day, has been a statutory public holiday in Hong Kong since British colonial times (its observance was suppressed by the Communists on the mainland, but it was reinstated as a public holiday in 2008). To my surprise, people really do take it seriously. The cemetery close to my former home on Pokfulam Road is jam-packed with tomb sweepers during the holiday, and the streets are filled with people who burn paper money and paper replicas of material goods such as cars and cell phones for the benefit of ancestors in the other world.*

Chinese-style *asabiyah*, of course, is family centered. Lee Kuan Yew, the former prime minister of Singapore, put it well: “History in China is of dynasties which have risen and fallen, of the waxing and waning of societies. And through all that turbulence, the family, the clan, has provided a kind of survival raft for the individual. Civilizations have collapsed, dynasties have been swept away by conquering hordes, but this life raft enables the civilization to carry on and get on its next phase. The family and the way human relationships are structured do increase the survival chances of its members. That has been tested over thousands of years in many different situations.”<sup>71</sup>

So long as the family is stable, the group will survive. In the case of Hong Kong, it is inaccurate to say that people are individualistic. They typically do not work hard for their own self-fulfillment. They work hard for family members, ancestors, and future generations that will carry on the family line.<sup>72</sup> The problem, however, is that Hong Kong now has the world’s lowest birth rate: in 2009, it was 0.742 per woman of child-bearing age, far below the replacement rate of 2.1.<sup>73</sup> On the basis of such trends, it is estimated that 26.8 percent of the population will be age sixty-five or older in 2033, up from 12.1 percent in 2005. But it is a mistake to project on the basis of current birth rates. For one thing, the Hong Kong government can easily open the doors to more immigrants from the mainland to increase the proportion of productive workers, if need be. Second, the statistic itself is questionable. Across the border from Hong Kong, whole neighborhoods of “second wives” (*er nai cun*) are supported by Hong Kong

businessmen. Arguably, the aim is not so much to fulfill sexual needs outside the strictures of monogamous marriage—that could be done via legalized prostitution in Hong Kong—but to increase the odds that family lines get transmitted from one generation to the next.

*April 2009. Along with my wife and son, we meet our old friend Zhu Er, a longtime Hong Kong resident originally from Taiwan, who writes perceptive essays on Hong Kong culture and cuisine. In the past, Zhu Er has prepared magnificent feasts requiring days of advance preparation. This time, we settle for a Hangzhou restaurant on the third floor of a building in bustling Wanchai. It's the depths of Hong Kong's worst downturn since World War II, but the restaurant is packed. The elevator door literally opens into the restaurant; no space is wasted for frivolities such as a lobby or entryway. We are greeted by the owner, who proudly tells us about his cuisine and differentiates between people who eat to fill their stomachs (chi bao) and those who really appreciate food (chi hao). I'm reminded of the distinction between Epicureans, who lead austere lives and limit their indulgence of desires in order to seek higher goods in social settings (such as conversation among friends, or haute cuisine), and hedonists, who simply seek to gratify their bodily pleasures. Over dinner, I ask Zhu Er what's most distinctive about Hong Kong, and she says it's the highly localized nature of communal life. People rarely move around; they stick to their neighborhoods and develop rich ties with people around them. My wife remarks that this seems to be true even of Hong Kong taxi drivers: the ones from Kowloon seem to panic when they are asked to venture to Hong Kong Island, and vice versa.*

According to Confucian ethics, morality does not end with the family. Quite the opposite: it is learned within the family and then extended to other social relationships. As the famous opening passage of the *Great Learning* puts it, "When the family is regulated, the state will be in order; when the state is in order, there is peace throughout the world." Concern for people should be extended from intimates to others, from the family to other forms of communal life and eventually to the whole world, though with diminishing intensity as love extends further and further from the family.

*Our son Julien has spent most—eight years—of his life in Hong Kong. For him, it's home, and he constantly presses us to allow him to return to Hong Kong during his school breaks. The past couple of years, we've sent him alone by airplane; in Hong Kong, he stays with his cousin Lynn.*

Since the handover, Hong Kongers seem to be extending ties beyond the family and the neighborhood: they have shown a genuine civicism that seemed

to be lacking in the past. Between 2001 and 2009, Hong Kongers doubled the annual amount of volunteer work they did.<sup>74</sup> In the 1990s, observers of Hong Kong's urban culture such as Ackbar Abbas could argue that "prolonged periods of temporary and transient living conditions experienced by many of Hong Kong's postwar population, with the inevitable cycles of dislocation and rebuilding, have fashioned a cultural and social identity free of nostalgia for the disorienting and unstable patterns of the past."<sup>75</sup> Yet today there is a deeper sense of rootedness in Hong Kong, as well as concern for continuity with the past.<sup>76</sup> Reasons include the end of colonialism, an increased proportion of property owners and educated people in the population, and decreased emigration out of Hong Kong. People are fighting to protect their way of life. Since the handover there has been a blossoming of civic groups, such as green groups taking up issues like harbor protection, clean air, conservation, and climate change,<sup>77</sup> as well as less coordinated actions led by idealistic young people about specific issues like a planned railway that could threaten environmental and human habitats in the New Territories.<sup>78</sup> An uproar from concerned citizens and NGOs followed the government's proposal to destroy the much-loved Star Ferry Hong Kong terminal in order to make room for a harbor-front highway, and 150,000 protesters gathered to watch the Star Ferry's last trip from the terminal.<sup>79</sup> In 2003, a half million Hong Kongers engaged in a peaceful demonstration against the proposed national security law that, it was feared, would undermine Hong Kong's cherished civil liberties (the government lost; it was forced to withdraw the legislation, and the secretary for security resigned).<sup>80</sup> Talented filmmakers such as Wong Kar-wai express the yearning for stability and community, as in the scene from *Chungking Express* in which the plainclothes policeman protests against the expiration date on everything.<sup>81</sup> Recent architecture is responding to an increased sense of identification with Hong Kong's heritage (for example, the Central Library in Causeway Bay, which mixes Western and Eastern styles of architecture), and the city displays an increased tendency to renovate and refit rather than demolish old buildings.<sup>82</sup> Chinese and other historians have worked hard to refute the image that "Hong Kong has no history prior to its occupation by the British," as a 1924 British guidebook put it: today, the ground floor of Hong Kong's refurbished history museum offers a long saga of the area's formation from the geological processes through the Qing dynasty, along with depictions of Hong Kong folk life.<sup>83</sup>

*In the dark days of the SARS crisis, the health-care workers of Hong Kong made the city proud. In Taiwan, there were widespread reports of medical staff refusing to show up for work, some even jumping out of hospital windows for fear of being contaminated by SARS patients. In Beijing, health-care workers were basically locked*

*in their workplaces. Yet in Hong Kong, medical staff showed up for work out of a sense of professional duty and service to the community. Nobody seemed to let fear of death get in the way of caring duties, though several health-care workers did pay the ultimate price.<sup>84</sup> After the crisis ended, I expected some sort of parade or public ceremony of thanks. Yet nothing happened; they were just doing their jobs, I guess.*

The only real way to show commitment to the community is willingness to suffer harm on its behalf. Hong Kong's health-care workers proved that Hong Kong people work hard not only for themselves or family members.

*In Hong Kong, vigils to commemorate the people killed on June 4th, 1989, in Beijing have taken place every year since 1990. In 2009, my wife had a business trip to Hong Kong and I took the opportunity to pull my son out of school and send him to Hong Kong to attend the vigil. I phoned my son that evening, and he said that he had been too far away to see anything; the crowd had been bigger than expected. But he said that the vigil was moving, nonetheless. Tens of thousands—150,000, according to the organizers—gathered to mark the twentieth anniversary of the killings, dwarfing every vigil held since 1990. Many families attended with their young children.*

On June 5th, 1989, one million Hong Kongers braved a typhoon and took to the streets to protest the killings. Arguably, they were expressing fears about their own future. Twenty years later, however, civil liberties in Hong Kong are relatively secure; the worst fears of Hong Kongers in 1989 proved to be overblown. So why did so many people turn out on June 4th, 2009? The main reason, I would surmise, is to encourage the rest of the country to adopt a more humane system of government, starting with an official apology for the wrongs committed twenty years ago. It was about the good of the whole country, not just the good of Hong Kong. The huge outpouring of goodwill in Hong Kong following the Sichuan earthquake in May 2008 also suggests that Hong Kongers have extended ties to the national community. Just about every major celebrity in Hong Kong participated in fund-raising concerts, and ordinary people seemed genuinely shocked by the tragedy. What about concern for the whole world (*tian xia*, to use the language of Confucianism)? Skeptics will point to the relatively tepid response in Hong Kong to the Burmese cyclone that killed at least twice as many people a few days before the Sichuan earthquake. But the sphere of moral concern may be expanding. In 2009, restaurants across Asia organized to take part in a charity project that gave food aid for children in East Timor, and Hong Kong had the largest number of restaurants involved.<sup>85</sup> The

University of Hong Kong runs a successful program that sends students to teach English to Burmese children in refugee camps along the Thai border.<sup>86</sup>

*We are invited for lunch at the exclusive Hong Kong Country Club by Denis Chang and his wife, Agnes. Denis, one of Hong Kong's leading senior counsels, is busy with a court case involving the inheritance of Nina Wang, one of Hong Kong's richest billionaires. Mrs. Wang, despite her reputed personal frugality, made a will in which she left practically her whole multibillion-dollar estate to charity. The will is contested by an eccentric fortune-teller named Tony Chan, who named one of his children Wealthee Chan. The case is reported in the newspaper that is delivered to our hotel room, and the whole of Hong Kong seems to be cheering for Denis, who represents the estate of Mrs. Wang.<sup>87</sup> Denis tells us that Hong Kong is one of the best places to raise money for charity; it is a growing center for philanthropy.<sup>88</sup>*

Wai-lun, my friend, here's what I'd say if you were still around to argue with me. Maybe you should have looked at your own community with a more charitable eye instead of going to Montreal to study communitarianism. Yes, Hong Kongers are materialistic. But why do they care about money? After all, they don't seem to be enjoying themselves as much as people from other cities. Partly the moneymaking drive is other-regarding in the sense of wanting to impress other people with what money can buy. Agreed, that's not an admirable trait. But there's also a moral aspect to the Hong Kong ethos: people work hard to benefit others, starting with family members and extending to the neighborhood, the city, the country, and eventually the whole world. To be fair, it could be that things have improved since you left us; perhaps it was harder to detect the underlying morality of Hong Kong's ethos in your day. But I suspect you still wouldn't be persuaded by my argument. You'd say that I'm romanticizing Hong Kong and you'd criticize me for spending too much time talking to rich people who seek to sugarcoat the class structure. You'd encourage me to learn proper Cantonese so I could talk with people from different walks of life in their own native tongue (as opposed to English or Mandarin). In my next life, maybe. Here's what I'll do: next time I go to Hong Kong, I will burn a copy of this essay for you, and we can argue in the other world when it's my turn to go there.



## THE CITY OF POLITICAL POWER

*Early 2009. It's a long Air China flight from Europe to Beijing. As I take my seat, I'm called to the front of the airplane. Nervously, I make my way. I'm informed that I've been bumped up to business class. I'm about to ask why, but manage to suppress my desire to find out the truth: what if they find out it's a mistake? Sitting comfortably with my glass of champagne, I look at the menu, and I'm about to order the "Chinese-Style Specialty Beef Fillet" but I notice a footnote: "This entrée is specially created for senior government officials. Please accept our apology if your first choice is not available."<sup>1</sup> I wonder to myself: do other Chinese airlines, such as Air Shanghai or Air Shenzhen (not to mention the privately owned Hainan Airlines), have similar footnotes? I doubt it. Only a Beijing-based national airline would so publicly affirm the dominance of political power. I start reading Chinese-language material I had printed out from a Confucian website and my heart sinks when I come across an ad hominem attack by an elderly Beijing-based academic who argues that Confucianism must be interpreted within a Marxist framework.<sup>2</sup> I'm not named, but clearly the attack refers to me. I know this same academic has caused political trouble for other Confucians. Time for more champagne.*

*When we land I have a splitting headache. I get a bit nervous when the customs officer takes a bit longer than usual, but things seem to be OK. I take a taxi home and sit in the back. Normally I'd sit in the front to talk with the driver, but I hope he'll notice I'm not in the mood. He doesn't notice, and launches into the usual Beijing political talk. My driver reminisces about old Beijing, and remarks that they were poorer but happier. Life was less stressful in those days, the city was less polluted, and the government wasn't so corrupt. We're stuck in a traffic jam because it's the annual two-week meeting of the national legislature and advisory body and the streets are filled with the cars of government officials from around the country. My driver swears at a government car that speeds by the rest of us in a specially reserved lane.*

*A few days later, I fly to Shanghai to give a talk. I'm invited for a delicious lunch at the faculty club, and we're seated around a Western-style rectangular table. In Beijing, I think to myself, we'd be seated around a more "harmonious" circular*

table. The Shanghainese tend to adopt the latest Western fashions, whether good or not. Don't they care about the history of imperialism? Shanghai had the world's highest proportion of prostitutes in 1930: one in 130 women engaged in the trade, many of whom were serving Western imperialists who didn't have to submit to Chinese law. And what about the thirteen million pounds of opium that entered Shanghai in the 1870s (half of the opium imported into China during this period).<sup>3</sup> Not to mention that infamous sign about dogs and Chinese not being allowed in Shanghai's Huangpu park.<sup>4</sup> My hosts provide a graduate student to show me around town. It turns out she's a Communist Party member, but she doesn't want to talk about politics. My guide says she loves Shanghai, though I think to myself that Shanghai-style civicism is often accompanied by contempt for the rest of the country. Somehow the circle of commitments in Shanghai goes straight from the family and the city to the (Western) world, largely bypassing commitment to the country. Anyway, my guide brings me to a modern art museum and provides insightful commentary. Then I'm on my own for a stroll. I get lost and ask for directions, and a kind pedestrian replies in broken English; in Beijing, they always reply in Chinese when I speak in Chinese. I don't like the way the Shanghainese sweeten up to Westerners, though I'm supposed to be a beneficiary. I feel like saying that I'm from Montreal and I can't speak English, but I just say thanks (in Chinese). I walk the pedestrian-friendly narrow and winding streets—quite a contrast to the large boulevards of Beijing—and notice the lack of morale-boosting posters and pictures. So many fashionable women with cool sunglasses: no wonder they call Shanghai the “Paris of the East.” In fact, the whole city seems a bit feminine compared to Beijing. I pass an adorable little girl in pigtails; she picks up a rock and throws it at a boy, who squeals and runs away. Here's a small lane with old people playing cards and walking around in pajamas; but a nearby sign says (in English) “Benny Image Consultant.” Yes, I know it's silly to search for “authenticity,” but the Shanghainese seem to revel in the world of appearances.<sup>5</sup> Lots of young people wearing T-shirts with English-language slogans. Oh, here's one in French: a young woman's T-shirt reads, “Tu veux sortir avec moi?” (You wanna go out with me?), with drawings of two hearts over her breasts. Shameless. Plus there are so many mixed couples, with the Shanghainese women showing no restraint at all, holding the hands of their Western boyfriends, something you'd rarely see in Beijing. Don't these people have any national pride, I think to myself? But then I remember that I'm married to a Chinese woman; how can I object to mixed couples in love? Maybe I've spent too much time in Beijing. . . .<sup>6</sup>

Beijingers have a strong sense of civicism. But the city is full of national symbols, so being proud of the city also means being proud of the country. And being critical of the city also means being critical of the country. Either

way, what happens in Beijing has broader political implications. Both top government officials and leading social critics live in Beijing. The first part of this chapter will discuss Beijing's rise to political prominence. Beijing was the capital of Imperial China—the capital of the world, in the minds of its rulers—for more than five hundred years. China eventually realized that it was only one of several countries—and not the strongest among them—and the imperial system collapsed in 1911. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), led by Mao Zedong, established the People's Republic of China in 1949, with Beijing as its capital. Mao thought that China could free itself from its past and build a brand new communist future. But it proved to be an illusion that cost millions of lives.

The second part of this chapter will discuss the contemporary era. The CCP is now more Marxist, in the sense that it believes economic power is the key to political power. And the best way to build up the economy (and to hold on to power), in the government's view, is to depoliticize people. However, it's a mistake to think of politics just in terms of state-level power politics: Confucians remind us that the real sources of political power emerge from the ground up. In any case, Beijing is bound to reemerge as the site of major political change. What kind of change? Communism—an ideal that downplays the importance of the past and the moral obligations that come with it—is dead. As it should be. So people are (re)turning to history to think about the future. For some, it means being reminded of China's unhappy history at the hands of imperial powers, and building up a strong state that can get its own way in the world, regardless of moral considerations. For others, it means building a more humane form of government that draws on the best parts of China's past and inspires the rest of the world by means of moral power.

#### THE PAST: ERADICATING THE PAST

*A friend who works for UNESCO comes to Beijing and has special tickets to visit the restoration site of the Forbidden City's garden complex. According to the official story, it was burned down by eunuchs who wanted to cover up evidence of their looting, but our guide suggests that it accidentally burned down while the last emperor of China, Puyi, was watching a Charlie Chaplin film in his private screening room. In any case, the complex is indeed beautiful: pretty flowers and plants in harmony with the unobtrusive pavilions. But we're told the complex will be closed to the public once it is restored. Only top state officials and their guests will have access to it.*

Beijing has been the last and most enduring of China's imperial capitals. In the tenth and twelfth centuries it was one of several capitals for regional Inner

Asian empires, and it became the capital of all China under the Mongols in the thirteenth century. The underlying plan of the city is even older: “Elements of the city’s distinctive symmetrical layout had appeared in earlier imperial capitals at Changan (modern Xian), Loyang, and Bianjing (modern Kaifeng). Successive builders of Beijing drew on common precedents that reflected ancient beliefs and institutions, especially those that proclaimed the unique authority of the emperor. The long continuity in city planning and architecture in China’s capitals sprang from the close association of those traditions with the political legitimacy of successive dynasties.”<sup>7</sup>

To the untrained eye, it’s far from obvious why Beijing should have been chosen as China’s capital, and why it has remained so almost continuously for more than eight centuries. The weather can be harsh, with sandstorms every spring; the scenery is far from spectacular; and it is one of the world’s few large cities that is not located on a coast or major river. So why did rulers establish the capital in Beijing? The answer, not surprisingly, is the need to secure political power. Beijing is close to Mongolia and Manchuria, where premodern contenders for power in China often arose. These lands of Inner Asia produced the four non-Chinese dynasties that ruled from the site of Beijing: the Khitan Liao (916–1125), Jurchen Jin (1115–1234), Mongol Yuan (1279–1368), and Manchu Qing (1644–1912) dynasties. The Chinese Ming rulers (1368–1644) initially established their capital in southern Nanjing, but they moved it to Beijing after they realized they were too far from borders and mountain passes they needed to defend. They rebuilt the Great Wall that marked China’s northern frontier and the Grand Canal that supplied southern grain to the city. Beijing itself was designed to reflect the harmony of heaven, earth, and man,<sup>8</sup> with the Forbidden City—the imperial palace complex—at the very center.

*I’m lost somewhere in central Beijing and ask for instructions. I’m told to go west here, south there, then east a few blocks. But I’m hopelessly confused. How come Beijingers seem to have an almost supernatural sense of orientation? I wonder. The sun is no guide: it’s usually too polluted to see it.*

The Forbidden City stretched for nearly one thousand meters from north to south and stood on the main axis of the city, which ran north from the Temple of Heaven complex to the north wall (the Olympic stadium was built on a northern extension of the traditional axis). Under the Ming, Beijing’s population reached one million—probably the largest city in the world in the fifteenth century—and it has grown since. Today it has twenty-two million residents, including eight to nine million non-permanent residents.

From 1928 to 1949, the Nationalist Party (Guomindang, abbreviated KMT) established its base at Nanjing, and the key question is why the Communists returned the capital to Beijing after they came to power in 1949. After all, the Communist Revolution was supposed to sweep away the feudal remnants of the imperial past. It was also supposed to bring an end to the “century of humiliation” at the hands of colonial powers, dramatically symbolized by the ruins of the Yuanmingyuan palace in northwest Beijing that was burned to the ground by rampaging French and British forces in 1860. The main reason the Communist leadership—Chairman Mao Zedong in particular—selected Beijing as capital is that no other city could better symbolize political power and confer legitimacy on the new regime. Advisers had told Mao about three possible choices for a capital—Beijing, Nanjing, and Xian—but Nanjing was too closely associated with KMT rule, and the glory days of Xian were too far in the past.<sup>9</sup>

*Like many Westerners of my generation, I first paid attention to Tiananmen Square in May 1989. At that time, it was occupied by more than one million prodemocracy student demonstrators. It was an exhilarating period, the people taking charge of their political destiny and pushing for political reform of an authoritarian system, with the whole world seemingly on their side. For me, it was an especially exhilarating time because I also met and fell in love with a young Chinese woman who would become my wife. As graduate students in Oxford, we participated in marches and demonstrations in support of the student demonstrators in Tiananmen Square. Just about every overseas Chinese student joined the marches. But the whole thing came crashing down on June 4, 1989, when Deng Xiaoping ordered the army to violently crush the prodemocracy movement, killing hundreds of heretofore peaceful demonstrators around Tiananmen Square. It was state power at its most naked and brutal, and it plunged overseas Chinese students into depression. My wife told me she would never be able to return to China. And I had to give up my dreams of visiting the country. Or so we thought. In 2003, we moved to Beijing, and we've been here ever since. I teach political theory (including democratic theory) at Tsinghua University, the university that trains much of China's political elite, and my wife works as chief counsel for a leading U.S.-based investment bank in China.*

Moreover, Beijing was viewed as having played an important role in setting the stage for the triumph of the revolutionary forces. Tiananmen Square in particular had been associated with oppositional and mass movements in the twentieth century: “the demonstration on 2 May 1919 in protest against the Treaty of Versailles handing over Chinese lands to Japan; the patriotic march on 18 March 1926; the demonstration on 9 December 1935, which started the resistance against the Japanese invasion; the anti-autocratic movement during the Civil War on 20 May 1947.”<sup>10</sup> So when Mao was presented with a

plan, drawing on Friedrich Engels's *Dialectics of Nature*, that located Tiananmen Square as point zero—the center—of the new Beijing, Tiananmen Square was made the birthplace of the new People's Republic. It was chosen as the focal image of the country's insignia, with the five gold stars symbolizing the leadership of the CCP and the image of the unity of the revolutionary people.<sup>11</sup>

Mao personally decided to locate the government in the center of Beijing and rejected an alternative proposal by a group of conservation-minded architects led by Liang Sicheng and Chen Zhongxian to build an administrative center west of old Beijing, leaving the historical city intact. As Wu Hung notes, the failure of the conservation plan “was inevitable because it contradicted the basic tenet of the Chinese Communist Party at the time, which emphasized revolution, not preservation. To Liang and Chen, it was all too plain that great pressure would be placed on the old city unless the administrative center were set up outside, and that the destruction of historic Beijing was inevitable should it become the site of a growing number of modern buildings. But to Mao such concerns were irrelevant, because revolution meant destruction and transformation; it was only natural that Beijing should be remade when China was reborn.”<sup>12</sup> The next few decades tell the story of that destruction. Mao personally ordered the destruction of the city wall—what Liang had called a beautiful “national necklace”<sup>13</sup>—which to him symbolized the rotten old society and the authority of the privileged ruling class that they had just defeated.<sup>14</sup> The old city center was gradually redeveloped to adapt to the needs of growth, and radial and ring roads were built (today, there are six ring roads, with Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City as the symbolic first “ring road,” around which the others “revolve”). In 1958, CCP leaders decided to complete ten grand Soviet-style construction projects in Beijing as a visible demonstration of socialist achievements, including the Great Hall of the People and the Museum of Chinese History and Revolution on Tiananmen Square. That same year, the Monument to the People's Heroes was completed at the center of the square and Mao ordered the expansion of the square to symbolize the destruction of the past and make Tiananmen the largest and most spectacular such square in the world. Mayor Peng Zhen required that adjoining Changan Boulevard be strong enough to allow the heaviest tank to pass through without damaging the surface of the road. The last permanent development on Tiananmen Square was the establishment of Mao's Memorial Hall (with Mao's own body eerily gazing at passersby) in 1977. Since then, Tiananmen Square has been basically frozen in time, perhaps the only part of Beijing not to be affected by new developments.<sup>15</sup> What was once supposed to be a bright symbol of the New China has come to symbolize a bygone political era:<sup>16</sup> a frozen political structure that is backed up by brutal force, if need be.

*China is still officially a Marxist state. According to the formulation of the CCP, the current system is the “primary stage of socialism,” meaning that it’s a transitional phase to a higher and superior form of socialism, what Karl Marx called the “higher stage of communism.” The economic foundation, along with the legal and political superstructure, will change in the future. Most famously, Marx said the state will “wither away.” In communist society, there will be a material surplus distributed according to need, nobody would have to do unwanted work to earn a living, and society would be classless, and thus there would no longer be any need for a state that secures the interests of the ruling class. But how do we get to that kind of society, and when are we supposed to get there? It seems to me an important question to ask in an officially Marxist state. Not too long ago, I visited the Translation Bureau of the Central Committee of the CCP, the official Marxist Institute charged with translating Marx’s works into Chinese, in the hope of finding out more about what Chinese Marxists think about communism. The institute is flush with funds from the government, and its employees are relatively free to think about the appropriate conditions and mechanisms for the implementation of communism in China. But I came up empty. I was handed beautifully packaged translations of the Communist Manifesto, and the people I met spoke about the need to deal with the problem of economic inequality in contemporary China, but they seemed puzzled by my questions about China’s communist future. Let’s deal with the present problems first, they said, before worrying about the long term.*

The Communist Revolution has failed. More precisely, Mao’s hopes of realizing communism in his day failed (and I’ve yet to meet anybody who seriously thinks it can be brought about in the near future). Perhaps Mao himself never really hoped to realize communism? Why else would the Party advertise itself with the slogan “Long Live [literally: ten thousand years] the Great Chinese Communist Party!” which can still be seen on the façade of Tiananmen? That seems to contradict the aspiration that the state (and party politics) should eventually wither away. On the other hand, Mao clearly hoped to realize some form of a communist society, and the endless mass political movements were meant to bring about that end. But whatever he had in mind, Mao himself recognized that the historical reality had failed to live up to his expectations: in his groundbreaking visit to China in 1972, the U.S. president Richard Nixon attempted to flatter Mao with the claim that his writings had “moved a nation” and “changed the world.” Mao replied, “I have not been able to change it. I have only been able to change a few places in the vicinity of Beijing.”<sup>17</sup> Perhaps Mao was being unduly modest—on the plus side, the revolution had substantially increased life expectancy, promoted equality between men and women, and

built China into a great power that would no longer be subject to control by foreign powers; on the minus side, his political campaigns had plunged the country into turmoil and chaos—but few would dispute that the aspiration to sweep away the past with a brand new communist future has failed.

So why did it fail? There are several reasons. Mao himself seemed to become increasingly fanatical and delusional as he grew older. Perhaps he had a taste for cruelty and cared more about personal power than nation building, a thesis put forward by his severest critics.<sup>18</sup> Another reason lies in Mao's hostility toward Confucianism. The Confucian emphasis on family ties is so deeply rooted in Chinese culture that any attempt to emphasize ties to the state over those to the family was bound to fail. Similar arguments can be made about the attempt to replace the Confucian value of education with political passion. Instead of identifying with China's anti-Confucian king of Qin (who assumed the title of First Emperor), perhaps Mao should have drawn the lesson from the emperor's relatively short reign (221–206 BCE): that centralizing power and rule by fear is at best a short-term strategy for coping with chaotic times, not a recipe for long-term rule. Mao could also have drawn the lesson from Edmund Burke's critique of the French Revolution: that totalizing projects for utopian change can only breed terror and violence.

*The teaching of political theory in Beijing is surprisingly free (publication, in contrast, is tightly controlled). In more than seven years, I've faced only one restriction: I was warned not to teach too much Marxism. Democracy and human rights are fine, but if my interpretation of Marxism deviates too much from the official line, I might get in trouble. Over the years, however, I've taken some liberties, and I've taught a few lectures on Karl Marx's thought. Once, I delivered a lecture on Karl Marx's theory of history to a group of undergraduates. In my view, I concluded, Deng Xiaoping had a better understanding of Marx's theory than Mao did, because Deng recognized Marx's point that communist societies need to go through a capitalist phase to develop their economies. My students seemed really surprised, so I asked the class, "What exactly have you been learning in your compulsory classes on Marxism?" One cynical student replied that official Chinese "Marxism" can be summarized in one slogan: obey the Party.*

But I would argue that the main reason for the failure of Mao's communist vision is that he fundamentally misunderstood Karl Marx's theory of history.<sup>19</sup> Mao seemed to carry to an extreme the Leninist idea that a society can move straight from being poor, undeveloped, and quasi-feudal to entering a bright communist future.<sup>20</sup> The Great Leap Forward was an attempt to industrialize within the span of a few years, mainly by means of revolutionary energy, and the



result was the death of tens of millions of people. Marx himself would have objected on the grounds that poor countries must go through capitalism on the way.<sup>21</sup> Here's why: The capitalist mode of production treats workers as mere tools in the productive process and puts technology to use for the purpose of enriching a small minority of capitalists. But it does have an important virtue: it develops the productive forces more than any other economic system. The reason is that capitalists compete with one another to make a profit; hence, they have an incentive to develop new, ever more efficient means to produce goods, creating a large material surplus without which communism would not be feasible. If communism is implemented without developed productive forces (advanced technology and the knowledge to make use of it) that underpin material abundance, it won't work for long. Without an "absolutely essential material premise," as Marx and Engels put it in *The German Ideology*, "want is merely made general, and with want the struggle for necessities would begin again, and the old filthy business would necessarily be restored."<sup>22</sup> That's why Marx supported British imperialism in India: yes, it would be exploitative and miserable for Indian workers, but it would lay the foundations for communist rule.

So that's the main cause of Mao's failure: he should not have attempted to skip capitalism and move on to communism by relying on political exhortation and mass mobilization alone. Perhaps millions of lives could have been saved if Mao had been more serious about his studies in Marxism.

#### THE PRESENT: THE POLITICS OF DEPOLITICIZATION

Today, Beijing continues to symbolize the political power of China.<sup>23</sup> The language spoken in Beijing sets the standard for the rest of the country. The same goes for Peking opera, which is viewed as the national form of opera. And Tiananmen Square is still the sacred political space that it was for much of the twentieth century. It is the site for national day parades and the highly symbolic changing of the flag. But there hasn't been any demonstration there since the last one was crushed in 1989. The reason is obvious: demonstrations would threaten the political legitimacy of the ruling party. Hence, any hint of a demonstration is nipped in the bud by the ever-present security officers before it happens.

But the rest of Beijing—the rest of China, I'm tempted to say—has been radically depoliticized. That is, the state has loosened its hold over society. The Chinese state still engages in political repression, but it is no longer a totalitarian state. The state's control over the economy has been eroded, and free market reforms have led to two decades of double-digit economic growth. The majority of Chinese have personal freedoms almost unimaginable thirty years ago: stu-

dents are no longer assigned jobs by the government when they graduate; there are far fewer constraints on religion; people can marry and divorce as they see fit; they are free to travel abroad, so long as they have enough money; there are bars and discos for all types of people, including members of the gay community. In fact, most people are basically free to do what they want, so long as they leave politics to the seventy-eight million members of the CCP. But is it really that simple?

For one thing, there are thousands of social and political demonstrations every year—according to official figures, there were fifty-eight thousand “mass incidents” (strikes, street protests, roadblocks, and other forms of mass protest) in the first three months of 2009<sup>24</sup>—suggesting that all is not as well as it seems. China’s widening income gap is approaching Latin American levels and threatens to divide the country into separate classes. Religious freedoms are severely curtailed in Tibet and Xinjiang. The state’s call for a “harmonious society” can thus be viewed as an implicit recognition that things are not so harmonious; but unlike in Maoist days, today the CCP says that conflicts must be resolved peacefully, not through violent class conflict.

*As a twelve-year-old boy, I took great pride in the fact that my home city, Montreal, was hosting the 1976 Summer Olympics. This meant that Montreal was affirmed as a city of global importance. The beautiful (if unfinished) Olympic stadium took my breath away when I first entered it: I felt at once tiny and grand. To my everlasting disappointment, however, the Canadian athletes did not do so well. For the first time in Olympic history, the host country did not win any gold medals.<sup>25</sup> When Greg Joy, the Canadian high-jumper, missed his chance for a gold in a tight finish with a Polish competitor, I plunged into depression for several days. Going outside after the event, I could not understand how Montrealers could put on happy faces. It seemed disrespectful and disloyal. And later, it became somewhat upsetting to realize that the Olympics had not really succeeded in transforming Montreal into a global city. The rise of the proindependence movement led to an outflow of monolingual Anglophones, and Montreal was soon replaced by Toronto as Canada’s financial capital and largest city in terms of population. Today, Montreal is a cool, laid-back, bilingual city, but its glory days may be over (see the chapter on Montreal).*

*In 2008, I was also cheering for China. I was proud to show visitors the stunning Bird’s Nest Olympic Stadium off Beijing’s fourth ring road. I applied by lottery for Olympic tickets using the Chinese IDs of my wife and parents-in-law, and managed to secure tickets to many events. Although I was a bit dismayed by the foreign coverage of the Beijing Olympics, which seemed to relish every bit of bad news, it didn’t stop me from enjoying the sports. And yes, I confess, I was cheering for China to overtake the United States in the gold medal competition. I viewed it as an appro-*

*priate symbol for a more desirable multipolar political future, where no one country has the power to invade another in defiance of global opinion. And I think the Chinese fans and athletes did not arrogantly display their new power; they were usually kind and friendly to visitors and athletes from other countries.*<sup>26</sup>

Here's how Machiavelli opens chapter 21 of *The Prince*: "Nothing enables a ruler to gain more prestige than undertaking great campaigns and performing unusual deeds."<sup>27</sup> He goes on to praise Ferdinand of Aragon, then the king of Spain, for pursuing campaigns of conquest that "kept the minds of the barons of Castille occupied with that war, so that they would not plan any revolts." The king "continued to make use of religion, resorting to a cruel and apparently pious policy of unexampled wretchedness. . . . Thus he has always plotted and achieved great things, which have never failed to keep his subjects in a state of suspense and amazement, as they await their outcome. And these deeds of his have followed one another so quickly that nobody has enough time to be able to initiate a revolt against him." We can call such tactics the politics of depoliticization. The ruler consciously engages in political activities that have the effect of turning the subjects' attention away from political issues.

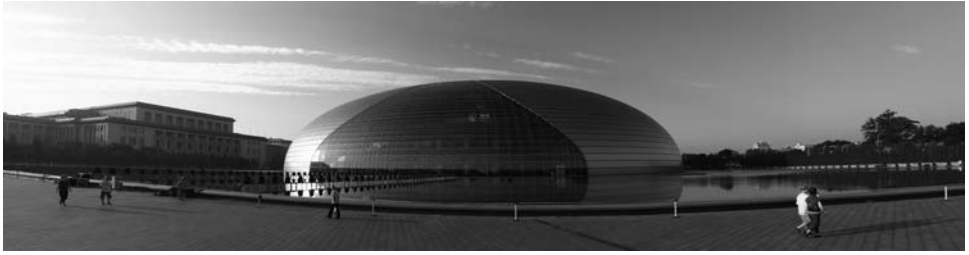
Sporting activities like the Olympics can also be viewed in this way. In the same chapter, Machiavelli advises: "At appropriate times of the year, he [the ruler] should keep people entertained with feasts and spectacles." A spokesman for the Chinese government claims that "politicization of the Olympic Games is not compatible with the Olympic spirit,"<sup>28</sup> but that claim can't be sincere. It's obvious that the Olympics had a political function: to showcase China's remarkable progress over the past decades under the stewardship of the CCP and, yes, to divert attention, at least temporarily, from China's social and political problems. And it worked. Other than a few social critics, most Chinese took great pride in the Olympics and opposed efforts to rock the political boat during the Olympic Games.

Is that a bad thing? It depends on the means employed to achieve glory for the state. Machiavelli's praise for bloody invasions and "unexampled wretchedness" points to a moral compass that's seriously out of whack. The same goes for Legalist "Machiavellians" in the Chinese tradition, such as Han Feizi, who praises the use of cruel punishments for keeping people in check and increasing the power of the state. But the Chinese Olympics are different. Yes, the Chinese government has (indirectly) supported awful governments in Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Burma. But it's a bit of a stretch to claim that the Chinese government's misdeeds could have justified a boycott (in my view, there might have been a better case for boycotting the U.S. team in response to its country's invasion of Iraq). It also depends on what the government is doing at home. If the

Olympics were used to prop up and glorify a racist regime, as with the Berlin Olympics in 1936, that would certainly justify a boycott. But the oft-made comparison between the “genocide” Olympics of Beijing and the Nazi Olympics of Berlin is dubious at best. Yes, there is repression in Tibet. But did anybody seriously believe that China would carry out genocide or launch a world war after the Olympics? And where’s the official racism that was so central to Nazi ideology? I’ve yet to see a single statement by the Chinese government to that effect. Quite the opposite, in fact: the former minister of culture Wang Meng gave a brilliant speech to the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Committee in which he not so implicitly criticized the Chinese hurdler Liu Xiang for claiming that his gold medal (during the 2004 Olympics) shows that “yellow people” can also run fast. Wang added that “we can’t always talk in the bitter manner of a bullied concubine,” and he praised the black athletes who, shortly after losing the race, went to congratulate Liu Xiang for his victory.<sup>29</sup> Here in Beijing, the government bent over backward to encourage athletes, spectators, and citizens to be kind and civil to people from other countries during the Olympics.<sup>30</sup> Yes, the government may have used some harsh tactics, such as displacing people from their homes without adequate compensation in order to make room for the Olympic venues,<sup>31</sup> but I haven’t seen the kinds of evils that would have justified boycotts.

Ultimately, it may come down to a dispute between those who love competitive sports and those who don’t. The indifferent ones will suspect that spectacles such as the Olympics are ultimately political tools used by governments to confer legitimacy and detract from opposition. Sports, for them, is really about politics. Those who love sports will say that the critics have it backward: the point of politics is to provide the conditions for the good life, and the good life includes sports. So politics is really about sports. If a government does a good job staging an international sporting event and people enjoy themselves, the government is doing what it’s supposed to do. So long as no gross evils are committed in the process, it’s fine to take pride in the spectacle and we shouldn’t agonize too much over the morality of the whole thing.

*Shortly after it opened in late 2007, I attended a musical performance at the egg-shaped National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing, located right next to Tiananmen Square. I marveled at the structure, which seemed to be floating above an artificial lake. Inside, the acoustics were nearly perfect and the hall felt quite intimate, even though I was sitting in the last row. After the show I took a taxi, and the driver immediately launched into a tirade against the new building. He complained that it was designed by a foreigner (the French architect Paul Andreu). I replied that in the past, many of China’s famous buildings, such as the Yuan-*



National Center for the Performing Arts, Beijing. Photograph © Sunxuejun. Courtesy of Shutterstock.

*mingyuan (the Old Summer Palace), were designed in collaboration with foreigners. I asked him if he was against the new Olympic stadium, also designed by a foreigner, and he replied, of course not. I noted that the Grand National Theater's roof has the yin-yang symbol, perhaps the most common symbol of Chinese culture. Then the driver said that the real problem is that the building is not harmonious with the buildings that surround it.<sup>32</sup> I tried to make a joke, replying that the other buildings are so ugly, why should it try to conform to their style? He didn't laugh. Then I tried the Confucian line about harmony being different from conformity, but he said there still has to be some continuity of style and meaning. He pointed out that the nearby buildings have political meaning; Tiananmen Square is the center of China's political structure and the buildings around it should have political meaning. I asked about the Beijing Hotel, on the other side of Tiananmen Square: it's not a political building. So what's wrong with an opera house? He replied that the hotel serves a political function because the members of the National People's Congress stay there during their annual meeting.<sup>33</sup> I said they could also go to the opera when they're here. The taxi driver shook his head and said, "That's just entertainment."*

Confucianism, the main political tradition in China, is basically a philosophy of social responsibility: we should strive not just to develop our individual characters but also to be other-regarding to the extent possible, and those in positions of power should rule in a competent and compassionate manner. Yet one passage in the *Analects of Confucius*—the “mother of all texts” in the Confucian canon—seems sharply at odds with the Confucian emphasis on social responsibility. The passage, perhaps the longest in the whole text, seems to lend itself to an apolitical (or antipolitical) interpretation. In this passage, Confucius is sitting with four of his students, and he asks them about their different ideals (11.26). The first student, Zilu, says that he wants to run a state with a thousand chariots and within three years he would defeat foreign armies, conquer famine, and imbue the people with courage. Confucius responds with a skeptical smile. Ranyou then says,

more modestly, that he could govern a smaller state, but it would take an exemplary person to promote higher civility and music. Zihua then says, even more modestly, that he could serve as a minor protocol officer. Zengxi, the final student, initiates perhaps the most puzzling exchange when he says that he would like to bathe with his friends and then return home singing. Confucius responds with approval. Yu Dan, author of a best-selling book on the *Analects*, takes this passage to mean that personal attitude is more important than commitment to politics. She invokes the authority of the great Song dynasty scholar Zhu Xi to argue that Zengxi's ideal seems minor in comparison, but that it's actually superior to the others because Zengxi aims to develop his inner attitude and self-cultivation rather than having concrete plans. Later on, she again discusses Zengxi's ideal, using Daoist language to point to the importance of appreciating nature and then mentioning Zhuangzi's idea of "individual contact with the forces of the universe" to explain Confucius's approval of Zengxi's ideal.<sup>34</sup>

But it would be odd if the passage were really about pursuing individual happiness, harmony with nature, and individual contact with the universe. What would that kind of view be doing in a book that stresses the importance of social relations and political commitment? In my view, the passage is about political commitment, but Confucius means to stress that political commitment isn't just about governing the state. Consider the end of the passage, where Confucius, conversing with Zengxi, explains his reaction to Ranyou and Zihua. Confucius says that they're still thinking about important forms of social and political commitment even though they're not pulling the highest levers of state power (Yu Dan cannot make sense of this further discussion; if her interpretation is correct, the passage should have ended with Zengxi's ideal; no need for anything further). What about Zengxi's ideal? It makes sense in the context of other passages in the *Analects*, where Confucius points to the importance of singing and informal social interaction among intimates as crucial for forging the bonds of trust that underpin social harmony. What Zengxi describes—singing and playing with friends—contributes to the social trust (social capital, to use the language of contemporary social science) necessary to sustain the harmonious society. Confucius endorses that activity because it's foundational, the necessary context for "higher" forms of morally defensible political activity. Zilu thinks he can govern a state and change it just by the force of his personality and correct policies, but he ignores the necessity for social trust in rendering those policies effective, and that's why Confucius is most dismissive of his ideal. If we interpret Zengxi's ideal (and Confucius's response to it) that way, the passage as a whole makes more sense: political commitment involves everything from governing the state to informal interaction among intimates, and the latter is, in some sense, more foundational.

Does this sound implausible? Not to some tyrants who set out to destroy political systems. The smart ones know they have to go after the social foundations. Hence, when Aristomedus overthrew the government in Cumae in 534 BCE, he not only massacred the senate but also systematically broke up the gymnasia. In those days, the gymnasium was the setting for institutionalized pederasty, and the social bonds forged in gymnasia strengthened and underpinned bonds in society at large. By closing the gymnasia and forcing all youths reared in the city to wear long hair and dress in the fashion of girls, Aristomedus sought to discourage a “noble and manly spirit” and to atomize those inclined to restore the old ways.<sup>35</sup> In other words, limiting the freedom of association and preventing traditional social gatherings is key to undermining the ancien régime. Put positively, seemingly apolitical activities such as singing and swimming with friends are what really create social harmony and political stability.

So that’s what I would have said to the taxi driver, had I thought of it at the time. Politics is about music, too.

*October 1, 2009. On the sixtieth anniversary of the “liberation of China” by the CCP, I’m invited to discuss educational and social trends on national television. The city is in lockdown mode to prepare for the massive military parade, and I’m asked to spend the night in a hotel close to the television station. I go out for a stroll, and the streets are deserted except for security personnel and an elderly man taking his caged canary out for a walk. I’ve been told what the show will be about and I’ve also been asked to say ahead of time what I’ll talk about. The show is live and there is no room for uncertainty. I do object to one segment where the hard-rock singer Cui Jian is presented at the “representative musician” of the 1980s. Cui is a talented musician and an exciting performer—I’ve seen him live at a small club in New York—but I don’t think he was representative of that era. The Taiwanese songstress Deng Lijun was more popular among students, and she also appealed to different segments of the population. Deng’s sweet and melodious songs—inspired by Tang dynasty poetry—are still popular today. So I change the script and make the case for Deng on live TV. I worry a bit that I’m trampling on political sensitivities—Deng was a lifelong anti-Communist, who never visited mainland China—but hope it will be OK (after all, my eighty-four-year-old father-in-law—a veteran of three wars and one of the last Communist true believers in China<sup>36</sup>—is a big Deng fan). No major damage is done, it seems: I’m invited back on the show at a later date to talk about the new Confucius movie.*

Early Chinese rulers sent envoys out among their people to listen to, record, and report the types of songs the people were singing. If their songs were joyful

or happy, the people were contented and the king was secure. If their songs were mournful and resentful, they were dissatisfied and the king was in jeopardy.<sup>37</sup> But music was used not just as a kind of polling device to gauge the political mood of the people. Rulers were also encouraged to improve people by promoting the right kind of music. Once again, the Confucian formula is diversity in harmony. According to the *Record of Music*, a text said to have been compiled by Confucius himself but edited and reworked by various scholars of the Han Dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE), “In great music, there is the same harmony that prevails between heaven and earth.” The music will vary from place to place, but the moral effect will be the same: “In the whole world, there is the same feeling of love. . . . The styles of music will differ, but the feeling of love [that they promote] is the same.” And the music itself will embody the ideal of diversity in harmony: “When the notes are varied and elegant, with frequent changes, the people are satisfied and happy.” Such music elicits feelings of joy and may stimulate the physical body into motion: “When signs and cries are not enough, before one realizes it, one’s hands begin to dance [in accordance with the music and the singing] and one’s feet begin to step in time.” Most important, the moral point of promoting the right kind of music is to protect the weak and vulnerable members of the community. If people’s desires are not regulated by harmonious music, society will be disorderly, with the result that “the strong will prey upon the weak, the many will oppress the few, the smart people will take advantage of the dull, the courageous will make it bitter for the timid, and the old, young, orphans, and solitaries [those without the protection of social relations] will be neglected.”

Of course, the flip side is that we should worry about music that produces morally bad effects. The new music of two thousand years ago was particularly problematic for the ancients:

Today’s music is not as joyful as old music. [In the past, the performers] advanced and retreated in unison, [and the music] was harmonious, correct, and powerful. . . . The character was cultivated, the family was regulated, and peace and fairness were secure throughout the whole kingdom. . . . But now, [the performers] advance and retire chaotically, the music is corrupt to excess, and there is no end to vileness. Among the players there are dwarfs like monkeys, the girls and boys are mixed together, and nobody knows about the distinction between father and son. Such music cannot be talked about, and it certainly doesn’t accord with the way of antiquity. This is the fashion of new music. What you ask about is music but what you like are mere sounds!<sup>38</sup>



In the *Analects*, Confucius was quite explicit that morally harmful music should be banned: “Banish the songs of Zheng. . . . The songs of Zheng are licentious” (15.10). But he also argued that rituals (with appropriate music) are more effective at changing people’s hearts than the strong arm of the law (2.3). So perhaps the conclusion is that the state should not prohibit music, but it needs to be careful about choosing the right kinds of music in public ceremonies and in schools for the young. As much as one may like Cui Jian (or the Clash, my favorite punk band), it’s not the business of the government to promote that kind of music.<sup>39</sup>

### THE FUTURE: REVIVING THE PAST

*One of the pleasures of living in Beijing is that people do not judge others (mainly) by how much money they have. Those who do have money like to show their culture, and they often interact with people from different social settings, such as politicians and artists (in comparison, Hong Kong is much more money driven and people tend to stick to their own social class). And the same person often does different things. There are often two or three different answers to the question, “What do you do?” As for myself, I’m an academic who’s also in the restaurant business: I helped to start a restaurant where I store my books and meet friends for conversation. The restaurant, called Purple Haze, is run mainly by two other shareholders, my Chinese friend Ah Wen and her Swedish husband, Tobi. Ah Wen has an air conditioning business on the side, and Tobi is a musician who plays with a jazz band in Beijing.*

What exactly is communism supposed to look like? Unfortunately, Marx himself said very little about social life in communist society. In the forty plus volumes of his works, there are only a few lines devoted to communist society. The most famous is a line in *The German Ideology*, written in 1846, when Marx was a young man: communism would make it possible “to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.”<sup>40</sup> Perhaps Marx just meant to say that people’s choices would not be determined by an economically necessary division of labor. But the examples are odd, because communist society would be characterized by developed technology (necessary for the material surplus that would free people from unwanted labor), and it’s unlikely that people would choose to engage in pastoral activities such as rearing cattle. Perhaps Marx refrained from further speculation about the nature of communist society because he realized that technology would lead to developments impossible to imagine in his own

time (could he have imagined the Internet?). But the downside is that he left the door open for all sorts of romantic visionaries (such as Mao) to impose their own crazy dreams on the ideal of communism.

More sober academic interpreters of Marx have also tried to articulate what communism might look like. Terry Eagleton's *The Meaning of Life* is an erudite critique of various possibilities, and he finally gets to something positive about his ideal in the last few pages. It's a society where each person could realize his or her individual talent in a way that allows and encourages the flourishing of other people. What might that mean, more concretely? Here Eagleton borrows an image from the Marxist political theorist G. A. Cohen: the jazz group. It's worth quoting in full:

A jazz group which is improvising obviously differs from a symphony orchestra, since to a large extent each member is free to express herself as she likes. But she does so with a receptive sensitivity to the self-expressive performances of the other musicians. The complex harmony they fashion comes not from playing from a collective store, but from the free musical expression of each member acting as the basis for the free expression of the others. As each player grows more musically eloquent, the others draw inspiration from this and are spurred to greater heights. There is no conflict here between freedom and the "good of the whole," yet the image is the reverse of totalitarian. Though each performer contributes to "the greater good of the whole," she does so not by some grim-lipped sacrifice but simply by expressing herself. There is self-realization, but only through a loss of self in the music as a whole. There is achievement, but it is not a question of self-aggrandizing success. Instead, the achievement—the music itself—acts as a medium of relationship among the performers. There is pleasure to be reaped from this artistry, and—since there is a free fulfillment or realization of powers—there is also a sense of flourishing. Because this flourishing is reciprocal, we can even speak, remotely and analogically, of a kind of love.<sup>41</sup>

That's a moving account of the communist ideal, but it also exposes what's wrong with communism: it downplays the importance of history and the moral obligations that come with it. In the real world, no matter how much money I have, it's not just a matter of realizing my talents in community with others. I also have obligations to people by virtue of roles I've occupied in the past, continue to occupy in the present, and will occupy in the future. History matters. That's basically the key insight of Confucian morality. My parents devoted years to

caring for me as a child and I owe them something when they get older, infirm, and in need of care. I can't just improvise within a freely chosen community if my father is ill.<sup>42</sup> I need to care for him even if it impinges on the sorts of things I normally like to do. My actions are and should be constrained. It needn't be "grim-lipped sacrifice"—in fact, it would hurt my father if I presented my caring as such—but it is a kind of sacrifice.<sup>43</sup>

*Beijing University has a proud history of social commitment, and its students often led political movements in twentieth-century China.<sup>44</sup> A few months ago, I took a leisurely walk through the campus with my wife. We passed a monument to students who were killed in a struggle against warlords in the 1920s. My wife commented that some day there will be a monument to students killed on June 4, 1989.*

If there's one thing I've learned in China, it's the need to be patient. Yes, political reform will happen, but it may take a while. One of my most embarrassing mistakes was predicting a constitutional convention on political reform on June 4, 2007, after the government had apologized for the June 4, 1989, killings.<sup>45</sup> As I write, it is now 2010 and we're nowhere near substantial political reform or an apology for June 4th. There will be substantial political reform one day, but that day may be far away. In February 2007, Premier Wen Jiabao said that China must stick to the current development guidelines for one hundred years. The reformers are more optimistic. A research report edited by the reformist scholar Zhou Tianyong published after the Seventeenth Party Congress in 2007 argued that China would need at least sixty years (starting from 1979) to transition to a modern market economy and a high level of political democracy. The last phase, from 2021 to 2040, would involve developing the framework of an improved democratic political system and the formation of a "medium-developed" mature democracy and the rule of law in a modernized state.<sup>46</sup> Elections are not specifically mentioned.

*One of my books discusses the revival of Confucianism in politics and everyday life in contemporary China. A friend suggested that an appropriate cover might be a (doctored) photo that replaces Mao's picture on Tiananmen Square with that of Confucius. It seemed like a great idea, though I realized it might be politically sensitive (two students who splashed red paint on Mao's portrait during the student demonstrations in 1989 were jailed for lengthy terms). I discussed it with my editors, and we thought of another possibility: putting a portrait Confucius next to that of Mao. Eventually, we decided to nix the whole idea. The unstated assumption is that such a cover might endanger my position teaching political theory at Tsinghua University.<sup>47</sup>*

In retrospect, I wonder why Westerners like me wholeheartedly supported the student movement in 1989. I didn't know anything about China; how could I have been so sure the students represented China's future? Perhaps it was a form of narcissism: I supported the students because they aspired to be like me? And perhaps the student movement itself was somewhat naïve. Of course the government was wrong to shoot peaceful protesters and they will eventually have to apologize for it. But it doesn't follow that the students were on the right side of history. They had an idealized view of democracy unsullied by any experience with it (hence, democracy could represent their wildest fantasies, similar to Mao's ideal of communism). Now that many students go abroad and that world news is more widely available in China (the Internet is less constrained than the published press and international news is relatively free compared to the tightly controlled national news), educated people in China tend to have more informed views of the pros and cons of democracy. For one thing, the invasion of Iraq has discredited the democratic model in the eyes of many Chinese: the United States seems to stand for hegemonic power politics rather than democratic ideals. And the economic rise of China has led to a new confidence in China's own traditions. There will be more political demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in the future, but the galvanizing symbol won't be the Statue of Liberty.

*June 2009. Following an interdisciplinary conference on Confucianism in Beijing, the great Confucian scholar Jiang Qing stays at my home for a couple of days. To his critics, Jiang is a "Confucian fundamentalist" who seeks to turn back the clock of history. To my mind, he is an original thinker who seeks inspiration from the rich and diverse Confucian tradition for thinking about political reform in China while also remaining open to the influence of other traditions. His proposal for a tricameral legislature—with a People's House chosen by democratic means, a House of Exemplary Persons chosen by meritocratic means, and a House of Historical Continuity composed of representatives of China's diverse cultural traditions—has been the subject of much intense discussion.<sup>48</sup>*

*We visit the Confucian temple first built by the Mongol conqueror Kublai Khan in 1306, and about fifteen young Confucian scholars are waiting for Jiang. They treat him with great respect. We make our way to the main hall to bow to the statue of Confucius, and Jiang is asked to lead the ritual. Somebody questions whether I'm supposed to join the ceremony, and Jiang forcefully objects to the narrow nationalism underpinning the question. Confucianism, Jiang says, is for tian xia (all under Heaven). Then we go next door to the Imperial Academy, the highest seat of learning in Imperial China. Tens of thousands of students passed through the doors of the academy to take the final stage of the imperial examinations that would lead to*

*political fame and power for the successful candidates. We are shown a platform where the emperor himself would come each spring to lecture on the Confucian canon, with the emperor's words transmitted by human speakers to the three thousand students in attendance. Jiang says that's not right. He refers the seventeenth-century Confucian social critic Huang Zongxi, who proposed that the emperor should sit among the ranks of students while the rector of the Imperial Academy—to be chosen from among the great scholars of the day—questioned him on the administration of the country.<sup>49</sup>*

There are two kinds of nationalisms in China today. One is a closed-minded, resentful nationalism that owes more to Chinese-style Legalism than to Confucianism. Those nationalists seek to make China into a strong military and economic power that can “say no” to the rest of the world,<sup>50</sup> whatever the moral considerations at stake. The other is a more humane form of nationalism that takes pride in China's cultural traditions while remaining open to other influences. Those nationalists creatively reinterpret traditional values so that they fit contemporary circumstances and answer the needs of present-day and future generations. They dream of a people who share a culture that is based on moral ideals rather than ethnicity or race, and their political aim is to build a country that secures the well-being of its people and inspires the rest of the world primarily by means of moral power.<sup>51</sup> It's too early to predict the winning side. But we can be sure that the political drama will be played out in Beijing.

## THE CITY OF LEARNING

*"How banal!" laughed a friend and twenty-year resident of Oxford when I told him about the book and my title for the Oxford chapter. "How much research did you need to come to that conclusion?" "Well," I said hesitantly, not missing the sarcasm in his voice, "what would you call it?" He thought long enough for me to drink half my pint of lager. "Hmm. . . . How about 'Oxford, City of Learning'?" We both laughed. "I'll drink to that," I said.*

I guess many will agree with my friend—who, by the way, has no connection to Oxford University. Indeed, this chapter's claim is that Oxford's ethos helps us learn about learning. Oxford's tolerance of nonconformism and eccentric behavior provides an atmosphere of learning. Not all residents of Oxford enjoy access to learning or benefit from this atmosphere, however. The chapter therefore ends with what remains to be asked: namely, how the ethos of learning can be shared by a wider population.

• • •

The name *Oxford* has always been synonymous with learning, and it's the first thing you think of when you hear the city's name. Oxford is one of best-known universities in the world, even though its student population is not large. In 2009, there were 11,765 undergraduate and 8,701 postgraduate students at Oxford. Undergraduate applications have risen by 61 percent over the past ten years, though the number admitted each year has remained about the same.<sup>1</sup> The university keeps the number of students relatively low because its system of tutorial-based undergraduate teaching requires that lecturers and teachers (tutors) meet students regularly for tutoring either singly or in groups of two to three. Despite its rather demanding coursework (most students submit papers to their tutors every week), Oxford University is extremely popular, partly because its graduates relatively easily gain acceptance to graduate programs in top universities and partly because an Oxford degree places graduates on the fast track to the most attractive jobs. I believe that Oxford is popular also because of the city it-

self—because of what it represents and because of the sheer pleasure of living in this thoroughly unique atmosphere for a while. But I confess that I am biased; both Daniel and I received our doctorates from Oxford. Justin Cartwright, a well-known South Africa-born and Oxford-educated writer, takes a similar position.<sup>2</sup> He claims that the city casts a spell on its students. But he is a graduate of Oxford as well. Might this suggest something? Are those who fall in love with the city mainly its students?

Oxford is certainly the oldest university in the English-speaking world. It is hard to say when it actually became a university. We know that teaching began in 1096; at first, the content was mostly theological and attendance was paid for by students who chose and hired private tutors. I mentioned this to a few of the students I interviewed, and their reaction was often similar and quite cynical: “That’s not a bad idea,” they quipped, although they were all proud to be at a state-funded university rather than a completely private one. Oxford University has, in fact, been dependent on the state for its success: in 1167, when King Henry II announced that English students would no longer be allowed to attend the University of Paris, Oxford became an attractive alternative.

Historians have different explanations of why Oxford, of all places, became a city with a world-class university; one explanation is that from the outset the quality of teaching was high and the curriculum wide. In the fourteenth century, the pope and the English kings praised Oxford for this. Another reason for Oxford’s success was financial. Well-known masters of religious houses increased their incomes by taking on what were termed “paying pupils,” and thus some teaching was carried on outside the college. This allowed a greater degree of freedom in the subjects taught, so gradually the number of subjects taught increased.

*When I asked students, “Why Oxford?” they replied, “We don’t know, but it certainly wasn’t the weather!” They recalled the Oxford blues, a common feeling of sadness associated with the gray December sky and the chilling dampness in the air during that wintry time when sunlight is a rarely caught pleasure.*

*I remember that, as an Israeli student, I was one of the few who stayed in Oxford over Christmas because it was too expensive to go home and because, like Muslims, Israeli Jews don’t celebrate Christmas. Indeed, the only other students who stayed in Oxford were the Arab students. So, for Israelis and Arabs, at least during this period, Oxford contributed to a sense of commonality and a shared fate.<sup>3</sup>*

As the university grew, early pupils needing lodging stayed at inns that provided room and board. Later, teaching rooms were rented at the inns, which eventually became student residence halls. In the thirteenth century, after vio-

lent clashes erupted between students and townspeople, residence halls were built that were designed to house only students, and thus to protect them. In the early fourteenth century there were 120 such halls.<sup>4</sup> Since not all students could afford the expense of attending the university, wealthy donors provided financial endowments to establish halls for students from poor families, or—in Walter de Merton’s case—to house his family members who could not afford the fees. This was the start of today’s system of colleges. The earliest colleges were University College, Balliol College, and Merton College, all established between 1249 and 1264.<sup>5</sup>

An important reform took place in 1878, when academic halls were established for women. Today all colleges accept both women and men, though the fact that I mention that this is true today may suggest that the story of Oxford, education, and learning, is not really an egalitarian story.

They say that there are more pubs in central Oxford than in any other UK city. I am not sure I believe this, but surely not many cities have stories about great academic personalities or famous novelists and poets sitting in this or that pub. Whether these stories are true is another matter, but we will give Oxford the benefit of doubt.

*If you are keen on having a large English breakfast in Oxford, you may want to join me in one of my visits to a small café near the Eagle and Child pub. There we can sit and order the most unhealthy but tasty breakfast one can think of. I used to do this when I was a student: it was cheap and comforting. Now that I can afford more and have become a vegetarian, the Eagle and Child pub is more attractive. It is an oddly shaped, very narrow building, with longish rooms and a long history, which you can read about online:<sup>6</sup> it is said to have been the lodgings of the chancellor of the exchequer during the English Civil War. That’s not much to boast about, to my mind: Oxford was the royalist capital and strongly supported the king. But if you really like the pub, as I do, you may care to side with those historians who dispute the claim that the pub housed the chancellor. After all, the civil war lasted from 1642 to 1649, and the pub has been an inn only since 1650.<sup>7</sup>*

But the pub’s claim to fame has to do with the Inklings, a group of Oxford writers that included C. S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. From 1939 to 1963, the Inklings met there every Tuesday at lunchtime. It is said that they did cross the road (St. Giles Street) from time to time to sit in the Lamb and Flag, another well-known pub and Oxford institution. St. John’s College bought both pubs in 2003, and, indeed, Oxford is one city where colleges own pubs and pubs are places where you will find informal academic and literary discussions being held over a couple of pints.



*I must confess that I am a bit partial to Oxford. As I said earlier, Oxford is where both Daniel and I received our PhDs. It is where Daniel married his wife, Bing. He is half-Catholic and half-Jewish, she is Chinese, and Daniel wrote a dissertation on the importance of attachment to forms of communal life.<sup>8</sup> It was in this city that I, too, married my wife, Yifat, who had come from Israel with me, and where our first child, also Daniel, was born. Many fall in love with Oxford at first but become tired and bored after two to three years; it is a relatively small city (the smallest in our book), roughly a half hour across by bike. But I could never find Oxford boring.*

*Since I graduated, I have been back every summer for a month or two, and twice for sabbaticals. In my experience, the city, which they say never changes, in fact changes a great deal, if only because there are so many students and they change. But although Oxford's first associations are with the university and its students, we wish to tell a story of a city that is more than a university but has an ethos dominated by that very basic virtue that the university encapsulates: learning—with all its advantages and drawbacks.*

#### LEARNING, RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP: CLARIFYING CONCEPTS

*After a long visit to the Oxford Botanic Garden, I leave the garden and turn left. The building next to the rose garden is the Daubeny building, a laboratory built by Charles Daubeny, one of the botany professors responsible for the garden's care. I read that he paid for the building himself.<sup>9</sup>*

I pondered why academics spend so much energy, time, and even money on research. What drives them to keep studying? With their interminable questions, are they like curious children faced with a mystery they feel compelled to explore? For some types of individuals, it is this curiosity that drives their inquiries. These types are the researchers. They feel that their job is to understand, discover, explore, investigate, and unearth the unknown, and show it to the not-knowing. For researchers, the two stages—researching and telling others—are equally important. In contrast to this type we have a second type: the scholar. For scholars, the purpose of learning is to acquire knowledge. It is not always about discovering the unknown or telling others about the discovery. Scholars who dedicate their lives to study are like a fruit that grows sweeter as it matures. And in the sense that it is about transferring knowledge to others—since the point is not to discover the unknown (although a scholar may encounter something new in her career, *new* is not what is important here), the scholar's gaze is fixed on handing down her knowledge to new generations of students. The biologist and physicist represent the researchers, and the intellectual historian the

scholars. The biologist and physicist convey the most modern theories and information on how the world works, paying scant attention to great theoreticians, including Galileo and even Einstein. Intellectual historians, on the other hand, teach Aristotle and Plato and are wholly convinced of the intrinsic value of such knowledge.

In contrast to Cambridge, with its outstanding natural science departments, Oxford is better known for the humanities and social sciences (although its natural sciences are also excellent). To be fair, the sciences are so good that in 2009, for example, Oxford was among top three European universities in winning European Union grants for research. Nevertheless, I think it right to say that in Oxford, unlike the Ivy League American universities, *learning* is more about being a scholar than about doing research. At Oxford, learning includes research, but the ideal Oxford don is a broad-minded intellectual, a scholar who passes his knowledge on to new generations. It is less a person with a long list of publications. Moreover, this attitude is not only the university's, but also the city's. Whenever I discuss learning in schools with my Oxford friends, it strikes me that they think of the experience a child or youth should get in school as broadening her mind, mastering a lot of knowledge, rather than focusing on how to do research.

"The college system creates a tremendous teaching burden for the college," explained the Exeter College rector, Frances Cairncross, when we met at her home. Therefore, I believe that Oxford's heavy emphasis on scholarship reflects, at least in part, the fact that academics who spend so much time teaching have very little time left for research and publication. An entire ethos has built up around scholarship, which is reflected, among other ways, in a very common phenomenon in Oxford, known to many as "the book fetish." People are extremely proud of their libraries, and Blackwell's Bookshop on Broad Street is perhaps the busiest bookstore in England. "It's as if being in the presence of books delivers exactly what a fetish object promises, supernatural powers, or power over others" writes Justin Cartwright, describing his return to the city where he studied.<sup>10</sup>

*I recall my first visit to my supervisor's study, with its mounds of books. The very thought that he must have read all those books made me feel like an ignorant person. On the other hand, I felt very lucky to be supervised by such a scholar.*

#### LEARNING: CONTEMPLATION AND CREATIVITY

*Every summer I go to Oxford to work, and usually I work in the Bodleian Library. This is probably one of the most uncomfortable places I've ever worked in. The chairs*

*are too wide and too deep, and they are not high enough for reading comfortably; the tables are much too high, and the light (should God give Oxford a reprieve from its fate of raining enough to ruin one's day) cannot penetrate the ungenerously sized window. Should you wish to use your laptop, the few seats with plugs nearby (laptops must be too noisy and modern for Oxford libraries) probably are already occupied. Yet, despite this, the library's unique ambiance attracts hundreds of people who insist on studying here. In my experience, this has been the place where many of my most creative ideas have been born—perhaps discomfort leads to inspiration and creativity? I'll try sitting on nails next.*

Artists might agree with this notion that one must suffer to create. But where I come from in the mostly sun-drenched Middle East, academics want comfortable, spacious, sun-bleached rooms, libraries, and laboratories in order to create. Yet, in Oxford the “coolest” thing is to have your room as dark, as cozy, and as messy as can be.

*I remember climbing the staircase to Professor G. A. Cohen's room in All Souls College for my end-of-first-year interview. He already had my paper and doctoral research proposal for approval of my continued research. I climbed the many stairs to his room, built in 1438, my heart beating rather quickly, partly from the climb and partly from the momentousness of the occasion. The staircase was very dark and a bit creepy, I thought. Professor Cohen was the Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory, holding a chair established in 1944 for the great scholar G.D.H. Cole of the Fabian Society. I had been nervously and anxiously awaiting this meeting for several weeks. I knocked on the heavy wooden door, but there was no reply. I knocked a second time, but still no reply. I waited another two to three minutes, and then knocked again. Just as I was about to turn around and ask if anyone had seen Professor Cohen, a voice behind me said, making me jump, “Why don't you knock on the door?” In the darkness and silence, the last thing I expected was a voice behind me. How had I missed noticing him climbing the staircase? I turned around. There was Professor Cohen, smiling cheerfully: “Did I scare you? Won't you come in?” He pushed the door for me. It was unlocked. And why shouldn't it be? I thought. This is Oxford. We entered the dark room, and I was hit by the smell of books, paper, and less than fresh air. This was hardly surprising, as the windows, tiny fifteenth-century windows, had probably not been opened in the past few centuries: had they opened, it would have been onto Oxford's High Street, nominated by the local press in 1987 as the most polluted street in Europe, with the exception, perhaps, of a couple of streets in industrial Poland. But here, inside the college room, we were protected from the pollution and probably also from the real world, where air smells, not of books, but of pollution from car fumes.*

*Professor Cohen pointed to a sofa—which was so old and its cloth so unraveled that I remember thinking it must have belonged to his great-great-grandfather—and offered to put the kettle on. He deposited himself in a chair near the sofa, but then rose, went over to his desk, and pulled out my paper from a huge, disordered pile, and deposited himself once more in his chair, saying, “So, Mr. de-Shalit, you think Ronald Dworkin’s theory cannot be applied to intergenerational cases?!”*

*That was the start of one of the most stimulating philosophical discussions I have ever had, the two of us talking, with piles of books all around us on the floor. When I think back, I am reminded of an amusing quotation from the Canadian writer and professor Robertson Davies, who comments wryly that to be a book collector is to combine the worst characteristics of a dope fiend and a miser.<sup>11</sup> We sat for a long time in the dark (Prof. Cohen never bothered to turn on the light, nor did he remember to make us that cup of tea after his old kettle had managed to boil) and discussed my rather undeveloped ideas profoundly and intensely.*

Back to the Bodleian Library: not only is it uncomfortable but the building is not even beautiful. It is the very thought that you are sitting in such venerable surroundings, where so many scholars have sat, and where (in what is now an exhibition room open to the public) the English parliament assembled during England’s Civil War (1642–51), that provides sufficient reason to study there. The room where parliament once sat has not changed in the past four hundred-odd years and, among other things, is used for filming historical dramas, including the excellent *The Madness of King George*.<sup>12</sup> This only adds to the unique aura of the “Bodley,” as it is known to Oxford scholars. Perhaps this and the closeness of the old library room with its rare handwritten books allow students and scholars alike to sit and contemplate, feeling “special” and “unique.” When questioned, many admit feeling extremely fortunate to be able to study in such a building. Do they feel part of a chain? I ask, to which they reply modestly, Oh, no, even though they do feel inspired by their knowledge that thousands of scholars, past and present, have sat here, in an unbroken chain of scholarship spanning several centuries.

*Entering the gigantic building of the Bodleian Library feels like entering a fortified castle. First, you make your way past dozens of tourists and unconventional types who sit on the outer steps on Broad Street, eating their lunch from plastic containers from the nearby covered market. Then you walk through the gate (in an ugly metal fence enclosing the building), past the offices, and into a quadrangle with large flagstones. The atmosphere is still fairly “normal,” with Japanese tourists snapping pictures and Italian summer school boys chasing summer school girls, all wearing prac-*



Cricket on a Sunday, by Christ Church College, Oxford. Photograph © Douglas Freer. Courtesy of Shutterstock.

*tically nothing. But once you see the doors of the Bodleian's multiple entrances, which are actually the doors to its Old Schools, with their Latin names painted in golden letters (Schola Moralis Philosophiae, the School of Moral Philosophy; Schola Logicae, the School of Logic; Schola Linguarum, the School of Languages, where Greek and Hebrew were taught), and once you see the sign, "Silence Please,"<sup>13</sup> you start whispering as though you'd entered a cathedral.*

The colleges try to stimulate their fellows (lecturers and students) to creativity by supplying the right atmosphere. Their approach is *mens sana in corpore sano*—a healthy mind in a healthy body. The idea is that if you offer students and scholars an aesthetic environment and facilities to carry on their sports (cricket, walking, jogging), they will intellectually develop more soundly. Many colleges therefore count cricket grounds and sport facilities among their attractions.

*When in Oxford during my summer research breaks, I enjoy meandering over to St. Hilda's College in the late afternoon. St. Hilda's is a beautiful building next to the River Charles. On the opposing riverbank one can see tennis courts and cricket grounds, which, when not flooded, as they often are in winter, are dotted with men and women in white, their voices drifting through the summer air. Occasionally you may encounter a theater group rehearsing, and, if you are fortunate (there are long lines), you can hire a rowboat (or a punt, which is a long, narrow boat) and watch the student production of a Shakespeare play from the river—free of charge, naturally. Indeed, in 1898 St. Hilda's College bought its first rowboat, which it called the Wild Goose.<sup>14</sup> The first punt was purchased in 1900. I wonder how many they own today; probably several. Punting is tranquility, and even if you lose the punt (the pole you push into the muddy floor of the river to drive yourself along) a couple of times and have to jump into the river to retrieve it, the joys of punting are great. Above all, I enjoy coming here to gaze at the beautiful garden and watch the smooth, gentle movement of the river. When we were studying at Oxford, my friend and colleague Saul used to say that when he finished his doctorate, he would photograph the landscape at St. Hilda's, make a massive print, and stick it on his window at home (which is not in England), so he could still see the landscape. He said, and I agree, that bringing this tranquil landscape to mind should have the same quality as formulating an interesting philosophical idea.*

#### LEARNING: THE RIGHT CLIMATE FOR STUDY

*While I was writing my dissertation for my D.Phil., a friend with whom I had studied as an undergraduate in Israel visited me in Oxford. He joined me in a class*

called “Star Wars” because the three teachers—Gerald Cohen, Ronald Dworkin, and Derek Parfit—were considered the best in their fields, and their approach to one another was competitive and somewhat antagonistic. Dozens of students packed into the library room at All Souls College, but I can’t recall which of the three “stars” lectured and who “slaughtered” him (our way of referring to the philosophical critique each lecturer was put through by a colleague), but it was certainly an experience. On our way out, my friend, who was very excited about the lecture, mentioned his dislike for the All Souls College architecture. He felt it was too dark and overwhelming, making students feel like ants. What my friend said reminded me of my recurring feeling while listening to my exalted professors, namely, that I was nothing, that I would always be nothing, and that I could never become such a great philosopher. My friend, however, did not let this feeling interfere with his ambitions. Back at my lodgings, he told me that he had decided to apply to study at Oxford, which he indeed did, and today he is an outstanding philosopher.

But not everyone dislikes gray stone towers. Kenneth Grahame, the author of *The Wind in the Willows* loved this architectural style. He claimed that he was often inspired by “the good grey gothic on the one hand and, on the other hand, the cool, secluded reaches of the Thames.”<sup>15</sup> So, what about these buildings attracts so many students and scholars, and why are artists, novelists, and freaks drawn to the city, not just to the university?

When I asked scientists, philosophers, and scholars these questions, I found a lack of consensus regarding the ideal circumstances and conditions for research and scholarship. They generally believed that for research, especially hard-core scientific research, comfortable conditions, a well-equipped laboratory, good-quality computers, good graduate students, and research assistants are needed, and perhaps even a challenge from rival colleagues in the same field.<sup>16</sup> But for scholarship and teaching, they believe that what was needed was tranquility, lots of spare time, and, instead of competition, cooperation and informal discussions over coffee or a beer, and a stroll in the park with colleagues and students. Indeed, many first-time tourists to Oxford are impressed with its tranquility and inspirational charm. “The world seems slower here,” said one tourist. But the blend of old buildings and open parks, students chatting as they walk through the streets in their draped gowns, and the abundance of pubs, bookshops, and music shops all create an atmosphere of calm. Add to this the multinational composition of the student population, and you get an atmosphere of tolerance and pluralism. Throw in Oxford’s stunningly rich past and long history of academic and cultural achievement, and you get scholars who believe in the importance of learning and see their freedom and leisure time as things legitimately provided to them by the state to engage in learning, contemplation, and teaching.

Most of the people I interviewed felt that Oxford University would not be the same if it were located anywhere else. I asked them the following: Say you took Oxford University, with its students, dons, laboratories, and libraries, and moved it all to a modern city with wonderful facilities. Would it still be the same brilliant university? Would it be as good? Most said unhesitatingly, no. What I think they meant was that the special X Factor that made the university so good and so special was its environment, its historic buildings—essentially, the entire town of Oxford. In my experience, Oxford has an *intimacy* that makes you feel at home in a way that is conducive to contemplation and study. A well-known professor of jurisprudence, Joseph Raz, once told me that Oxford is not a real place. Perhaps he is right. But it is still a place that arouses such a strong feeling of intimacy that very quickly you feel comfortable and at home.

Oxford University establishes this intimacy through its tutorial teaching system. It has taken face-to-face teaching to the extreme, even though the system is not very efficient.<sup>17</sup> Nowadays, most universities adopt the “frontal” teaching approach, in which a lecturer stands in front of a class of some fifty to five hundred students, but Oxford has remained faithful to its tutorial system, in which at most three students attend meetings with their teacher. Nick Crafts, the economist who wrote of the “loss of distance” with the Internet, electronic communication, and virtual communities, argues that the death of distance has been greatly exaggerated and shows that some activities cannot be practiced unless they take place here and now. Higher education, he maintains, especially graduate studies and research, must be face-to-face or it cannot be effective.<sup>18</sup>

Together, the city and its structures create an intellectual device known as “Oxford,” whose sole purpose is to support and encourage the pursuit of learning and knowledge by its students and scholars. Take, for example, the magnificent thirty-two-panel ceiling of the Sheldonian Theatre, which opened in 1668 and is now used for lectures and university ceremonies (tickets for excellent concerts—I recommend them—are available at reasonable prices). The ceiling, designed to give the illusion of open skies, depicts “the Triumph of Art and Science over Ignorance.”<sup>19</sup> The “Phil and Jim”<sup>20</sup> school, which my children attended when we were in Oxford on sabbatical, provides another example. The school has a good-sized playground and spreading lawn where the children can play football (or soccer, as it is called in the United States). The school’s classrooms face these open spaces and are so full of light they feel more like a home than a school. The school encourages its pupils to walk or cycle to school rather than come by car with their parents. This is a neighborhood school, the teachers said, and we should try to feel this by walking to school. My children still remember it as a place where they grew and were empowered. Indeed, when I try to explain that the atmosphere in Oxford is highly conducive to study, what I really mean is that it is a facilitative atmosphere that is also empowering.



*I spoke with a young woman who works at the Innerspace Shop on Broad Street in Oxford. She was born in Africa and now lives south of Oxford. "Do you like Oxford?" I asked her. "On sunny days," she replied, smiling apologetically. "I know what you mean," I commiserated. When I first arrived in Oxford as a student, I sensed immediately that this was the right atmosphere for studying. But that was in September, when the days were bright and clear. In December, I felt a gloom settle over me. And when I discussed this with the locals, they merely laughed knowingly, saying, "It's the Oxford Blues." On those days, I no longer felt the atmosphere was conducive to study. David Miller, a top political theory professor and my esteemed supervisor, once teased me, "The rule is there can never be more than two sunny days a week in Oxford!" And there I am, asking a student who came to Oxford a year ago from a desert climate whether the rain bothers him. He says, "Yes, a bit, but isn't it why there are so many pubs?" We both laugh and he adds, on a serious note this time, "Not to mention concerts, and theaters, and opera." Indeed, given that it cannot control the climate or the weather, Oxford has chosen to provide its scholars with the best possible intellectual and cultural climate for their minds to flourish.*

Establishing a climate conducive to learning has always been Oxford's goal, to such an extent that in the 1830s, when plans were made to build a railway through the city, Oxford University resisted it on the grounds that it might "imperil the morals of its students," and Christ Church College refused to let a railway station be built on its land.<sup>21</sup> In the end, the university could not stem the tide of progress, and agreed to the railway station on condition that the university be allowed to monitor students and their train destinations. This condition did not, however, assuage the fears of Oxford's first chancellor, Arthur Wellesley, aka the first Duke of Wellington, who feared that railways could encourage the "wrong people" to travel.<sup>22</sup> He worried that students might begin taking trains to forbidden places and undermine their moral fiber. Indeed, Oxford University's concern about its students' morals was part of fostering a climate favorable for learning and scholarship. Quite unbelievably, Oxford University still has "moral tutors" for students.<sup>23</sup>

*At the entrance to Christ Church Meadow—an incredibly beautiful, pastoral, simple meadow and popular Oxford walking spot owned by Christ Church College—is a notice with the following caution: "Meadow Keepers and Constables are instructed to prevent the entrance into the Meadow of all beggars, persons in rugged or very dirty clothes, persons of improper character or who are not decent in appearance and behaviour, and to prevent indecent, rude or disorderly conduct of every description." This notice is further evidence of the university's feelings of responsibility for providing its students with the right climate for study, among other things by*

*preventing poverty, misery, and ugliness from inflicting themselves on them. Strolling across the meadow and noticing the tourists and nonstudents who are enjoying the fresh air, however, I am struck that these days, most of the students who seek inspiration (and who are, naturally, not affluent) rent flats near the Cowley Road area, which is not wealthy, where most of the Asian and African immigrants reside, and where the streets are not as clean and tidy as, say, the north Oxford neighborhood of Summertown.*

Even Oxford street names reflect the city's respect for learning and scholarship. A narrow bridleway running from High Street to Merton Street (known as Horseman Lane in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, apparently in reference to the presence of a horse-powered mill), was renamed Logic Lane in the seventeenth century, after the school of logicians at its north end.<sup>24</sup> In the northern section of the neighborhood of Jericho there is a small bridge over the canal called Aristotle Bridge, which leads to Aristotle Lane. A number of park users have formed a group called "Friends of Aristotle Lane," which works with the Oxford City Council to improve the park.<sup>25</sup> A city that names its streets, bridges, and lanes after Aristotle or a historic school of logic is surely trying to deliver a rather specific message.

*One day, I heard lively music coming from Queen's Lane and went along to find the Oxford University Brass Band playing in the open air. I asked the players if there was a special occasion and they informed me that Oxford had a new Lord Mayor and they were playing for him. I remember that morning I had walked over to the Oxford Botanic Garden, located opposite the famous Magdalen Bridge and Magdalen College, and was told by the lady at the ticket office that there would be a special celebration for the new mayor that afternoon, and entrance to the garden would be free from noon to 5 PM. This brought me back to the botanic garden that afternoon. "Oh, you came back!" she said, greeting me with a nice smile. The garden was incredible: flowers everywhere, musicians playing, children dancing cheerfully around them, families out walking. I recall that at the time I had a touch of writer's block regarding my doctoral dissertation. I had new ideas, but I found them overwhelming and difficult to express. So I made it my habit to visit the garden and walk along its paths, letting my mind relax in the tranquil beauty of my surroundings. Then, I would return to my desk and find that the ideas flowed readily from my head and hands onto the computer.*

The Oxford garden is not only the oldest botanical garden in Britain; it is one of the oldest scientific gardens in the world. It was founded by Sir Henry Danvers, the Earl of Danby, who in 1621 donated five thousand pounds (the

equivalent of £3.5 million in today's money) for a "Physic Garden" to grow herbs and plants for medicinal and scientific research.<sup>26</sup> In those days the garden's purpose was "the glorification of God and the furtherance of learning."<sup>27</sup> Perhaps not in line with glorifying all Gods, the garden was built on the site of a medieval Jewish cemetery.<sup>28</sup> As is sometimes the case even today, the project started off on a grandiose scale but, once it was built, the money ran out for things like maintenance and the warden's salary. Also, like many young scientists today, the first head gardener, Jacob Bobart, a German botanist who came to England to supervise the garden, was so devoted to the project that he worked for seven years before receiving any salary.

*Thinking about this man's name, Jacob, his story reminds me of the biblical Jacob, who worked for seven years to marry Laban's daughter, Rachel, only to be told that he would first have to marry her older sister, Leah. In the end, he worked seven more years to win the hand of his beloved Rachel.*

This Jacob, being similarly romantic in his attitude toward his work and his studies, was responsible for establishing the status and tradition of the Oxford Botanic Garden. He and his son, also named Jacob Bobart, cared for the garden for seventy-eight years. Bobart senior was the first in the world to develop a plant classification system and almost certainly (we are not sure because the catalogue was published anonymously) produced the first listing and plant descriptions, published in 1648. Bobart the younger became Oxford's first botany professor and the first to initiate a botanical garden seed exchange system. The oldest tree in the garden today is an English yew planted by Bobart senior in 1645.

*One year I was invited to lecture at a political science seminar. As a guest lecturer in the city for a couple of days, I was given a college room. The porter told me proudly that it was the best room in the college. Fortunately, it made up for its lack of TV and radio with its rich character. It was a spacious room that faced the cloister and the lawn. I felt that if I stayed in this room a month I could write half a book. The room had a chair, an old-fashioned writing desk, a standing lamp, a huge clock on the wall, and about fifty volumes of the journal Punch, starting with 1884. Outside lay a deer park, and upon opening my window I caught sight of grotesque stone gargoyles, carved for ornamental purposes though some say they were political, reflecting the students' discomfort with their teachers. With the window open, I could hear footsteps downstairs, which sounded as though those who made them hadn't a care in the world. Tourists take life easy in Oxford, soaking up the ambience, and observing and admiring the students.*

*Magdalen College Chapel, 6 PM, choral Evensong. I go in. Concert posters: Haydn's Creation, the New College Choir. In Blackwell Music Shop (whose logo proclaims it "The Knowledge Retailer"), I observe the CDs of Oxford choirs: New College Choir, Magdalen College Choir, Lincoln College Choir, Christ Church Cathedral Choir, City of Oxford Choir, Oxford Gospel Choir, Oxford Bach Choir, Queen's College Choir. Some choirs in Oxford are not selling CDs at the moment, but you can listen to them in concert: Oxford Girls' Choir, North Oxford Choir, Summertown Choral Society, Oxford University Choir, St. Giles Choir, Oxford Children's Choir, Oxford Georgian Choir, two choirs from Worcester College, the Oxford Welsh Male Voice Choir, and perhaps a few more. Eighteen choirs, nearly one for every eight thousand residents.*

Oxford is home to quite a sizable group of novelists, poets, and artists. During Oxford Art Weeks in May and June each year, artists open their houses, offering the public a chance to visit the homes and studios of four hundred Oxfordshire artists and crafts people.<sup>29</sup> Amazingly, that is about one artist's home per four hundred residents. In addition to its art weeks, Oxford is famous for its Literary Festival, which attracts writers both local and from outside Oxford.<sup>30</sup>

*The Literary Festival's executive director, Angela Pryor-Jones, says she is not sure whether she sees her work as a job or a passion. I have known Angela for some time now, ever since her children, Francesca and Dan, became good friends with my own children, Shiri and Hillel, during one of my Oxford sabbaticals. So I think I know the answer: probably a passion, because no doubt there are better-paid jobs around. This is also true of university faculty, or colleges teachers, or teachers in Oxford's reputable state (that is public, not private) schools.<sup>31</sup> Angela observes that although her job as festival director is high-pressure and involves a great deal of organization, everything seems to go smoothly and calmly. The two of us are seated in her kitchen, enjoying our tea. I ask her about the festival, and while she talks I watch the birds in her garden, which at its far border melts into a large green meadow running down to the canal—or is it a river?*

*I have known the family for some time and I like them a lot, so, making an effort to be objective, I ask myself whether I am experiencing this other-worldly feeling of mind and body, this exquisite sense of tranquility and spirituality, because we are friends, or because we are discussing literature, poetry, and this chapter while drinking a "nice cup of English tea," or because we are gazing languidly out the window at this beautiful garden in the gently drizzling rain. I conclude that my feeling is objective. This is Oxford, a combination of factors and feelings, a pure moment of Oxford's unique magic, magic that I believe many people in this city experience. Or do they? Later we will explore whether everyone experiences Oxford in the same way.*

LEARNING: THE ROLE OF NONCONFORMIST  
BEHAVIOR AND TRADITION

The idea of nonconformism is often used in regard to private matters such as sexual habits or taste in food or the arts. Here I use the concept of “eccentrics,” to imply people who hold uncommon tastes or who do not behave in line with the common social codes of behavior. When I discuss nonconformism here, what I have in mind is intellectual nonconformism—views, ideas, or arguments that are nonconformist in the sense of radically diverging from the mainstream ideas of the person’s community. In this sense, to be nonconformist one’s views, ideas, and reasoning must be unpredictable. Society expects people to act, react, and hold views that are consistent with societal experience and knowledge of what is prevalent and everyday. For example, if 95 percent of people react to *C* by doing or believing *X*, then we would expect people facing *C* to do or believe *X*. When 5 percent of the members of a population deviate from the norm, they constitute a nonconformist minority. The point at which irregular behavior shifts into nonconformism is a function of infrequency. If only one person in a thousand believes something, then that person is likely to be a nonconformist. But to be considered a nonconformist, an extra something is needed. A nonconformist is someone whose beliefs or views aren’t just different because that individual belongs to a minority subgroup. Note that we are not talking about someone who opts out of society. A nonconformist is someone who insists on speaking out, saying what she wishes to say loud and clear.

A commonly held view is that in order to foster a climate of learning, society should encourage nonconformism. John Stuart Mill is still regarded as an advocate of this view. In his book *On Liberty*, which was published in the 1850s, Mill asks why we as a society need “troublemakers” who critically scrutinize our beliefs and question our institutions. He answers that when we believe something, there are three options: we could be wrong, we could be partly wrong, or we could be right. If we are wrong, it is clear why we need nonconformists to challenge our beliefs—we wouldn’t want our beliefs to be wrong. The same is true, most times, when we are partly right and partly wrong—it is better if our misguided beliefs are pointed out to us and put right. But if our beliefs are well-founded, why would we want them challenged? Mill offers a simple but attractive reason for testing our well-founded beliefs to make sure they *are* right: an unquestioned belief quickly becomes a prejudice, with a consequent loss of moral status. I would slightly modify Mill’s position. Whereas he argues that allowing nonconformism is the path to truth, I suggest that by allowing nonconformists to challenge our beliefs we can avoid certain errors (which is different

from arguing that nonconformist thinking is more likely to lead to the truth). One way or the other, nonconformists have a crucial role in society's progress.

But (theoretically) learning may be just a reiteration of traditional wisdom, in which case nonconformism would be only an impediment. Oxford's answer to this is clear. Learning for Oxford is never just about repeating traditional wisdom: even when learning is about the past and the great masters, it is always interpretive, and therefore new knowledge is always acquired even during the process of transferring knowledge from one generation to the next. As Justin Cartwright puts it, "The tutorial system, by design or accident, is addressed directly to the *questioning* of received wisdom and the probing of meaning."<sup>32</sup> A well-known postcard sold in Oxford shows a gargoyled person agonizing over his studies. The text supplies the wisdom: "*The more you study, the more you know; the more you know, the more you forget; the more you forget, the less you know; so why study?*" I think that this (corny) cynicism is actually expressing a sincere Oxford belief that the aim of learning is to broaden knowledge. Therefore, learning cannot accompany a conservative outlook because it is about *self-transformation*. After we learn something, we are not the same as we were before we learned it.

Nonconformism, or at least religious Nonconformism,<sup>33</sup> was accepted by Oxford University fairly early. In 1871, when the University Test Act abolished all religious tests for nontheological degrees at the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Durham, the initiator of the reform, Prime Minister William Gladstone, was anxious to see a Nonconformist college established in Oxford. Thus in 1886, Mansfield College was founded as a "Nonconformist College." Today, a portrait of Oliver Cromwell hangs in Mansfield's senior common room and portraits of the English dissenters of 1662 (who challenged the Church of England) watch over the library, as if to guard the college's Nonconformist freedom.<sup>34</sup> But this was not the first case of tolerating nonconformists. For example, in 1653, two hundred years before the founding of Mansfield College, Jesus College accepted the Nonconformist Samuel Jones as a fellow. It was just one example of Oxford's tolerance of nonconformism at a time when conformism was the rule.

*A few steps from Folly Bridge in the direction of the Carfax junction is an absolutely marvelous exhibition. The Bate Collection of Musical Instruments in Oxford University's Faculty of Music is an impressive collection of some two thousand instruments showing "the musical and mechanical development of all wind and percussion instruments from the Renaissance and the Baroque to modern times."<sup>35</sup> It was donated to Oxford in 1963 by Philip Bate. I visited the collection once while staying*

*in Oxford and was delighted to find so many instruments on display. I have no doubt that every music lover would be thrilled and pleased with this collection. But, above all, I experienced a sense of admiration for a city and a university that have established a place like this for us—citizens, tourists, students—to visit. I felt that if I had not already been a musician, I would have begun looking for a music teacher. I'm convinced that no one could be indifferent to the richness and beauty of music and musical instruments after experiencing such an exhibition.*

Originally, Mr. Bate gifted these historic instruments under the condition that they be available for students to play. Therefore, many of the collection's instruments are actually in use. The collection is open to the public for just a few hours a day and the display is "cramped."<sup>36</sup> But visitors do not mind too much when they can see the harpsichord that may well have been Handel's own, along with many other seventeenth-century instruments. The collection's website is very open about the questions regarding the history of Handel's harpsichord: "There is an uncannily close resemblance between this harpsichord and that on which Handel is leaning in the portrait by Philippe Mercier. Michael Cole, who first noted this resemblance, has published a detailed article on it in *Early Music* (February 1993)."<sup>37</sup>

*Oxford University's high respect for nonconformism attracts nonconformists to the city, enhancing its atmosphere and encouraging a very tolerant attitude, which also influences and inspires the school system. When I spent two years in Oxford with my family, my two children went to Church of England schools because they were the schools in our neighborhood, Jericho. As a Jew, I had a few qualms about this: Would they be expected to go to church? Would they have to conform to the school's religious denomination? To my surprise, this was far from the case. The schoolchildren represented many different religions: Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, and, of course, Christianity. A lot of parents were secular, in fact. The school policy was to enlighten children about all religions. They took the children to meet rabbis and Buddhist scholars, and of course they took them to a church. The headmistress asked my wife to come and explain to our son's class about Passover and its origin and customs. Our children returned home one day excited about having met Hindu parents who explained their religion and customs. By the end of the year, my children were very informed about different religions and were certainly more open and tolerant to other cultures than they had been previously.*<sup>38</sup>

It is also widely accepted that nonconformism, or what academics often call "thinking outside the box," is the basis for creativity in learning and research. It

was after a year or so of living in the city that I understood that nonconformism was encouraged not only by the university but by the city as well; take, for example, the celebration of First of May (May Day), with traditional Morris dancers and a group jump by dozens of residents and students into the River Charles's icy water at 5 AM as the choir sings from the nearby college tower.

Yet, one could ask: To what extent is nonconformism about nonconformity, and when does not conforming equal eccentricity? Oxford tends to take nonconformity so seriously that it seems to embrace behavior that may be considered eccentric. Whether this aids learning is a moot point, although it is certainly an asset to Oxford tourism—especially the numerous legends about ghosts.<sup>39</sup> Now, ghost stories are not necessarily about eccentric behavior, but the point is that they do form an important role in Oxford's culture, and this is quite eccentric. Even a few college websites and information guides contain stories about ghosts. But ghost stories are not the only signs of eccentricity. Both the older and younger Bobarts of the botanic garden were quite eccentric. Reports were that Bobart the elder would deck his beard with pieces of silver, and that he had a pet goat.<sup>40</sup> A prominent philosopher, still active today, was known for giving tutorials while taking a shower. Whether this is a myth or a true story is really not important; the point is that he was so eccentric that everyone believed the story.

*There is a shop on Cowley Road that is named after its phone number—722027. The sign outside the shop states, oddly, “We are not open Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays. Saturdays we are open only a few hours.” Is this really a shop? If they really wanted to sell anything, would they be open only one day a week?*

*One evening I stroll further along Cowley Road, where I come to the Hobgoblin Pub, which advertises archly, “You will never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy.” Inside, the atmosphere is charming. People are singing along to some guitar music, and the bar staff do not hide their appreciation for the not very professional guitar players.*

So why is there such eccentric behavior in Oxford? Some might say that college dons can indulge in eccentric behavior because their jobs are secure: tenure gives them license to behave unusually. But if the answer were so simple, we would find eccentric behavior in numerous other universities where faculty members have tenure. But we don't. So there must be another reason why eccentric behavior is so common in Oxford. It is only when we compare Oxford to other towns where eccentric behavior abounds, such as Berkeley, California,



that the uncomplicated thought occurs: maybe eccentricity flourishes where tolerance and acceptance are found. People in Oxford are not put off by eccentricity, nor are they surprised by eccentric behavior or taste. As a local friend tells me, they are so used to it that they often don't notice it. They simply don't see extreme behavior or taste as eccentric in the least.

*Underneath the Bridge of Sighs is a tourist information sign. It states that the mayor of Oxford inspects the city wall every three years because of an agreement made back in 1379, when permission was given to build New College inside the city walls. I sigh beneath the Bridge of Sighs: nowadays the wall is in the center of town. A city with this kind of tradition must be eccentric!*

Interestingly, some argue that there is no need to be a nonconformist to study and become a scholar. On the contrary, to study you must sometimes feel connected to a scholarly tradition, feel part of a community of individuals who are deeply enthusiastic about what they do, even if they are doing whatever it is—reading, research, studying, writing—alone. Exeter College's homepage says: "Step into our front quadrangle, and you are in another world. . . . magnificent Victorian Gothic Chapel, whose spire dominates the Turl St. skyline; and the loveliest gardens in Oxford. . . . [I]n the summer it is one of the nicest places imaginable to sit with a book, or just sit, or play croquet." The website discusses the history of the place, Exeter's famous past students J.R.R. Tolkien and William Morris, and its "world-class teaching." The Christ Church College website expresses pride in the "fascinating history and distinguished people who have studied here," among them John Taverner, Philip Sidney, John Locke, Robert Hooke, John Wesley, Robert Peel, William Gladstone, Frederick Lindemann, William Walton, W. H. Auden, Hugh Trevor Roper, Jan Morris, David Dimbleby, Rowan Williams, Richard Curtis, and Howard Goodall. Indeed, the people who have lived and worked in Oxford are part of its atmosphere. It is as though this heritage is "forcing" you in the same direction, toward the life of the mind.

*The church near Queen's Lane has a sign stating that St. Edmund of Abingdon, the first master and theologian of Oxford University, who later become the archbishop of Canterbury, is buried there. He taught at Oxford in 1195–1201 and 1214–1222. As I stand reading the sign and looking around, a couple of tourists come over and join me. They read the sign, look at each other, and say, "Wow"—a small word that says a lot. These tourists are secular Americans, and yet when I ask them what they are feeling, they say they feel that "it must be something" to study and live in a city where a medieval saint taught and is buried.*

## LEARNING AND CLASS

*In 1986, when I was accepted to Oxford to write my doctoral thesis, the university wrote asking me whether I would like to be addressed as “Sir.” This was apparently because my surname has “de” in it (“de-Shalit”). I replied, “Comrade’ will be enough!”*

Earlier, I discussed the fact that Oxford offers the right atmosphere for studying not only to its students but also to nonstudent residents. But sometimes providing the right atmosphere can deteriorate into elitism, which always seemed to me not only stupid in its own right but also instrumentally harmful to science. For example, in my humble view, the Oxford institution of “High Table” is about snobbery and elitism. High table is basically a special table for college teachers, with a richer menu, more wine, and more deferential service. It costs extra, of course. The architecture of the dining halls of Oxford colleges was built with this tradition in mind: students would be seated at long tables down the center of the hall while the college master and fellows sat at the end of the room at a separate table on a raised platform, facing the students. Thus the experience of dining reinforced the superior status of the master and fellows, who were often served a special menu. Here is how the website of one of the colleges describes these formal dinners:

Formal Hall: On Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, formal hall is served from 7 PM and lasts about 45 minutes. It is a three-course meal, which costs about £4, served by the kitchen staff. Everyone must wear gowns and dress is appropriate to the occasion. After everyone is seated, those dining at High Table process in and stand behind their chairs. The fellow presiding at High Table bangs on the table, and everyone rises. Grace is said in Latin, after which everyone sits down again to enjoy the meal. On Sundays wine is provided; on Tuesdays and Thursdays you are allowed to bring your own. . . . It’s a great place to meet and get to know people.<sup>41</sup>

*When I was a student, many of my fellow students looked forward to being invited to dine at High Table by their supervisors or other college fellows at least once a year. As for me, I turned down invitations to dine at High Table. During my sabbatical, however, I was invited by a colleague and decided to attend. The food was nothing to write home about and the atmosphere—polite conversation with strangers seated on either side of me, smart attire, and blessings in Latin—neither suited my mood nor impressed me. I have never attended High Table again. My position is simple. I believe a university must be egalitarian: a community engaged in sharing learning*

*that abolishes class and all forms of distinctions and barriers. A university should espouse the values of humanism and Enlightenment, and equal status. So, even though it is good to respect scholars, there is no need to establish a barrier when people are engaged in something as basic as eating, even if you call it “dining.”<sup>42</sup> Anyway, between us, I have always felt that Oxford University introduced the idea of High Table to compensate for the food being so . . . well, not wanting to insult anyone, shall we just say “ordinary.”*

The former editor of the *Economist* and well-known journalist Frances Cairncross is now rector of Exeter College, one of the few female heads of an Oxford college. We sit in her study, which is just how you would imagine a study to be: full of books and papers. There is a long desk with a computer and printer, and the sense that a lot goes on here. She listens as I discuss our project and book. I ask her whether class is an issue in her college, and about “town versus gown.” She is remarkably candid, saying, “Notice how the colleges’ architecture and social structure are anything but inclusive.” I agree. Ms. Cairncross explains: the colleges are self-contained; their windows face an internal courtyard. The courtyards imply that the action is inside the college, the students are meant to concentrate on what is happening inside the college, not outside. Ms. Cairncross compares this with London’s terraced houses, home to working-class and bourgeois families alike, where the doors open directly onto the street. In London, she says, houses are connected to the street, whereas in the university, courtyards separate the colleges and student residences from the street and city life.

*I remember giving a paper in Brighton some years ago. Brighton University had taken the step of knocking down the walls that divide the town from the university. My seminar was advertised in the city through the local newspaper, and nonstudents were invited to attend. Indeed, quite a few came. After the formal seminar, we all went to a pub and continued our discussion there. Then we went to a restaurant, where those who had jobs paid for those who did not. I think of the new colleges in Oxford—St. Anne’s College, for example. Their new buildings were added onto the older ones, usually using a lot of glass, so they are transparent. Since these buildings face the street, there might be a message here—of openness to the public. I think of Berlin, where glass buildings are meant to reflect the triumph of democracy and liberty (see the chapter on Berlin). I mention these thoughts to Ms. Cairncross, but she is skeptical. The buildings are built of glass, she says, because it was cheaper, and the entrance to the dorms is still via the inner courtyard. So the college is still oriented inward.*

Do students mix with city people? Not exactly, says Ms. Cairncross. Her explanation is original and offers food for thought. She was a student at St. Anne’s

College when it was an all-women college. The women needed to go to the men's colleges when they wanted to socialize, but they were not allowed into the men's rooms. Male and female students therefore went out to the pubs, where they mixed with local residents. Because nowadays the colleges are co-ed and more liberal, students can get everything they want inside the college. They have less need to go out, and therefore go out less, mingling less with local residents.

*I follow the instructions in the well-designed "Oxford Science Walk" leaflet.<sup>43</sup> I cross into Christ Church Meadow via Rose Lane, and follow the wall to the right. There I find a plaque in honor of James Sadler. Sadler was the son of a pastry cook who became an assistant at the Ashmolean Museum and became the first English balloonist when he flew a hot-air balloon to Woodeaton, six miles from Oxford, in 1784. Twenty-seven years later he flew from Birmingham to Boston. Though he did not cross the Atlantic (this was the original Boston, in Lincolnshire), this balloon ascent marked a great English accomplishment and breakthrough in human flight.*

So is Oxford University closed off to working-class people? Of course not. In fact, the university, with its idea of learning, allows people to achieve social mobility through education and knowledge rather than through property and income, at least theoretically. Oxford students are, of course, assessed on their academic performance rather than their social origins; therefore, Oxford offers some social mobility via study. I say "some" because one would expect an education from Oxford to provide far more social mobility than it does. But the reason is very understandable: most British high school graduates cannot go to Oxford University because there are so few places available. Moreover, almost half of Oxford's undergraduates attended private schools.<sup>44</sup> Students who were not accepted to Oxford either attend other universities or are below general university entry requirements. This means, in fact, that Oxford University contributes to perpetuating a class system in which the poorer, more disadvantaged segments of society have fewer chances for social mobility. This is true not only for Oxford and other leading English universities, but for top-ranking universities everywhere. The fact that there is only one (or maybe two or three) "top" university makes it the most popular and sought-after by students. "Top" universities will accept only the brightest students, often from the best schools and wealthier families. Because graduates of the top-ranking universities have the best chances of obtaining the choicest career positions, the top universities essentially help to perpetuate social class differences.<sup>45</sup>

Some colleges try to correct this. Exeter College, Ms. Cairncross told me, feels it has a duty to the town to share at least a small part of the college's fortune. The college thus has a program for mentoring high school students and a charity, initiated and run by Exeter students, that takes high school students

from disadvantaged homes away for a two-week fun vacation. The university has also developed a student-run charity called Jacari: Time to Teach.<sup>46</sup> This home-teaching program asks college students to commit themselves to at least one year of helping ethnic minorities in Oxford, teaching them English as a second language. The volunteers teach children in their own homes for an hour or so a week and meet their parents. The leaflet for the university students reads, “The chance to give something to the surrounding community is a really worthwhile experience, an opportunity to see a very different side of Oxford and breaks down the traditional barriers of ‘town and gown.’”<sup>47</sup>

When I reflect on Oxford University’s approach to teaching—say, teaching philosophy, with which I am familiar—something bothers me, however. The approach to teaching philosophy is wholly analytical, the sole focus being on theory, “pure” nonapplicable theory (theory not meant to be applied), sometimes using examples drawn from science fiction rather than real life. This shows scorn and disrespect for real-life questions and “applied philosophy,” which many Oxford philosophers believe is second rate, all of which suggests to me something quite disturbing. The philosophical approach taught at Oxford is not about making the world a better place. Its interest is in a purely theoretical world that does not exist. Seeing themselves, first and foremost, as bound to the forms and rules of the sciences, Oxford philosophers think in categories and concepts and tend to analyze these in an ideal world rather than the real world, where things are vague and mixed and odd. The saying “It’s only academic” is particularly apt for Oxford’s philosophical bent. And if so, then perhaps those among us who care about removing the walls between town and gown, who believe that learning should not be the right and preserve only of the elite, should be bothered.

*At one of the colleges students are playing croquet. A largish group of tourists is standing around taking photos. They are all enjoying the delicious May sunshine and blue skies. A thought comes to mind: mostly, the state pays for students to study at Oxford, yet here they are, playing croquet in the sunshine. I notice that they have been playing for two hours. Is that alright? Part of me says that it isn’t—they should be indoors working on their research, if that’s what the state is paying for them to do. On the other hand, if we would like outstanding minds to produce outstanding research, they must also rest, enjoy sports, play, and relax—after all, a sound mind in a sound body. I observe the students; they are quite young. One day most will work in the City of London global financial center, or become hospital physicians, prominent lawyers, politicians, or university professors. But what if somebody from the east side of Oxford, where most residents have never been near a college, could come over and see this: wouldn’t they feel that it was unfair for the state to subsidize these students?*

Surprisingly perhaps, the percentage of Oxford children who earn high school diplomas is rather low. According to the City of Oxford website, in 2006, 45.8 percent of Oxford children received five A\* to C grades on the GCSE (high school graduation exams),<sup>48</sup> compared to an average of 56.6 percent for Oxfordshire county. Furthermore, more Oxford children leave school without earning a degree than do children in the rest of Oxfordshire.<sup>49</sup> The “no qualifications” map is very revealing, showing the percentage of residents in different Oxford neighborhoods who have no educational qualification. In north and central Oxford, very few residents have no qualifications: 0 percent to 17 percent; in the area south of Magdalen Bridge and even south of Cowley, however, a high percentage of residents have no qualifications: between 36 percent to 86 percent. At the same time, 26 percent of Oxford’s working-age population goes to college or university—the highest percentage in England and Wales.

*I keep strolling. I walk near the canal, and across the water I can see Allan Bullock Close, where I lived in subsidized accommodations when I was a student. Allan Bullock Close was where I did my research while the people next door paid taxes to finance me. Did I feel guilty at the time? Do I feel it now? I’d like to think that I have given something back to society. But what does society think of it? Do the people who never went to college but paid their taxes so that I could go feel the same way I do about what I have or haven’t given to society? I continue walking until I reach the Magdalen College fellows’ garden, which only college fellows may enter, and there is closed-circuit TV monitoring of who goes in. In contrast to the impression one gets from the TV monitoring system, the garden is restful and quiet; I wish I could go in. Is that what those people who didn’t make it to college—to Oxford University, in particular—feel when they are not permitted to enter college grounds? Is Oxford a “gated community”? Is that how the townspeople see the university as they watch the students strolling about in their gowns?*

Because Oxford is such a tolerant city, it attracts quite a few homeless people. Someone I know who helps them told me that another reason the homeless come to Oxford is because it is close to London. When they find London overwhelming, many homeless people and rough sleepers go to Oxford, which is fairly well equipped with shelters—five day shelters plus five night shelters.<sup>50</sup>

*Daniel’s father was a well-known Canadian writer. He certainly didn’t dress well, and his beard was grayish and straggly. While on a visit to Oxford once, he decided to take a break on a bench in the city center. Removing his hat, he set it next to him on the bench. A passerby put some money into it. Near the train station, I stop to buy a homeless-oriented street magazine, The Big Issue, from a homeless man.<sup>51</sup> He*

*notices that I am not English and is surprised that I want to buy the magazine. We start chatting and I ask Jim (that is his name) his opinion of Oxford as a city. He says that he likes it; he grew up in a rural area. His parents moved out of the city when he was young, but he never liked the countryside and tried to move to the city and make a life, but he didn't succeed. Now he is homeless. He arrived in Oxford some time ago. It is difficult to talk with him about the city because he keeps raising philosophical questions. He wants to talk about genetically modified food (GMF), and when I tell him I used to research the ethics of GMF and that his arguments are very interesting, he replies: Just because I am homeless does not mean I don't read. I ask him whether he likes reading and talking about these issues because he is in Oxford and so many people are scholars, and he looks at me in surprise: no one here has spoken to him like this before. Well, my experience of Oxford is different from his, I tell him. I often see people chatting with homeless people who are selling The Big Issue.*

But is this tolerant and hospitable attitude toward the homeless reflected in the university's attitude toward people from the lower classes in general? Frances Cairncross says that one of the differences she noticed after she moved to Oxford was that there were so few manual car washes compared to North London, where there were many. She asked herself why, and the answer she found was the scarcity of working-class immigrants in Oxford. She says that this has to do with rent. Students pay high enough rents that landlords need not provide cheap housing for immigrants—the market is more expensive than working-class immigrants can afford. She thinks this is largely responsible for Oxford's character.

But perhaps the gap between town and gown is only natural because many times people connect when they become parents and meet other parents, and school intakes in Britain are based on catchments areas that are naturally homogenous socially and economically. So, because the working-class population of Oxford lives in the south and east of the city, and the academics, who are mainly middle- and upper-class, live in the north and west, they do not mix through their children's schools because of the school system. Could this explain the town-gown divide?

*I remember my early days as a student in Oxford. On my first visit to the open market to buy vegetables, I stood in line behind an immigrant from Africa. In those days, market merchants were all white and, unlike today, all born in England. When the turn of the man in front of me came, the saleswoman shouted at him, "You weren't in the queue." He looked at her, stunned, so she added, "You know, a queue; it's an old English tradition."*

*Twenty-two years after my first Oxford market experience, I went to visit the open market on a rainy day, very early in the morning, when the market workers were setting up the sales stalls. Most of the market workers were immigrants, not necessarily from the developing world. I went into the first café I found open at that hour to wait for the market to open. The young woman behind the counter served me a surprisingly good, strong cup of espresso. "You cannot be English," I laughingly commented, "because your espresso is really strong." "Well," she replied with a smile, "I am from Croatia. But," she hastily added, "I have been here for more than three years, so I feel almost English." "And how do you find Oxford?" I asked her. "Good people," she answered, and repeated, "very good people."<sup>52</sup>*

*Sue (not her real name) is a "scout" (doing household and cleaning work) at one of the colleges I have returned to for the past twenty-three years. She calls me "Professor." I tell her my name is Avner. She calls me "love." She warns me to be careful on the staircase; it's old and the stairs are not of uniform size. I ask her how the bank holiday was. She smiles happily: "My family came; we had a barbeque." I ask her where she is from and she says Blackbird Leys, a rather poor neighborhood in the south of Oxford. I plan to go there to interview a group of people and am eager to hear what she can tell me. But she would rather discuss the professors in the college. He is very nice; she is very kind; he is very clever; she is very pretty. They treat her nicely. One professor lets her use his first name; another doesn't. He prefers the title "Professor." This morning, I went to the market at 5:30 AM; she saw me going out and asked me if everything was alright, assuming that if a guest wakes up so early in the morning, something must be wrong. When I return soaking wet after a long walk in the rain, she is worried. "It is too cold to walk outside," she scolds. We chat. She is proud of being one of the longest-serving scouts in the college. I ask her if it doesn't feel odd calling these people "Professor" after knowing them so many years. She laughs, saying, "It's nice to say 'Professor,'" and for a minute it seems to me as if she is singing the last word.*

My interview with a group of Blackbird Leys residents is most illuminating. My friend Fran, who works there, takes me to the interview. Fran and Ken are delightful people we met on one of my sabbaticals. They were our neighbors, and their son Ralph, then the funniest teenager I had ever seen and now a most gifted writer and actor, went to school with our son Daniel. En route she explains whom I am going to meet. The people in the group grew up in the neighborhood, but unlike many from Blackbird Leys, they now work and are independent of the state. The neighborhood is a council estate, that is, public housing to be occupied by the more disadvantaged population for subsidized rent. Some say that this is the largest council estate in the United Kingdom. Ac-



ording to the 2001 census, 45 percent of Blackbird Leys residents lacked educational qualification, only 41 percent were employed full time; 9 percent reported poor general health, and 18 percent suffered with long-term illness. The neighborhood website's home page advertises training and has links offering job-hunting assistance. Summertown, on the other hand, where white-collar employees, academics, lawyers, students, and artists live, also has a website. Its home page has headings such as: "Eating Out," "North Oxford Schools" ("Some of the best state and private schools are to be found in and around Summertown"), information about recycling, cafés open for lunch, and so on.

*In Blackbird Leys I meet a group of four people at the charity-run Advice Centre, which provides useful information on money matters and welfare benefits, and helps local residents to deal with their life situations. I meet the staff, who all live in Blackbird Leys. I ask what word comes into their heads when I say "Oxford." At first I receive the usual answers: "home," "rivers," "colleges," "spires, like in the postcard." Then I say, hold on, that's fine. But what associations would other people from your neighborhood have? Now the answers change: "wealthy people," "Oxford money," "posh accent," and "town and gown divide". I noticed that the university people speak about "town and gown"; in Blackbird Leys, they add the word divide.*

*I ask the group if they are frustrated. They say yes. One says that Magdalen Bridge (considered the southernmost point of the university) is a border. They rarely go to the center of town. One recalls that when he was a child, his father said that if he went into town he should not tell people he was from Blackbird Leys. One recalls being on holiday in southern England and hearing a stand-up comedian ask the audience where they were from. He asked the interviewee, who hesitated briefly but in the end decided to tell the truth. The comedian joked, "Everyone out; this isn't a safe place!" "Not my kind of humor," comments my interviewee.*

*I ask the group whether they ever meet students from the university. In my discussion with the college rector two days earlier, she had said proudly (and rightly so) that her students had a project that reached out to help youngsters from outside the college with their schoolwork. I thought they probably didn't reach out as far as Blackbird Leys. The Blackbird Leys groups say that some students had worked in the Leys, but it was rare and "they are not reliable." Sometimes they come; sometimes they don't. I ask, Do you think anything can be done to bring students and local residents together? "That would be nice," they agree and offer suggestions, such as advertising events that take place in Blackbird Leys, which might attract students. But, they add, "perhaps this would bring people from other parts of the city, but we have no idea what's going on in other neighborhoods in town."<sup>53</sup> "Is the gap between you and other communities in town an issue in the upcoming local elec-*

tion?" I ask. "Oh, no," they say. "Here we care that they are closing down the post office: people will be fired and lose their jobs."

I ask the group what they think about learning. Do they think Oxford is a city of learning? They say that the neighborhood schools are not well-funded and that children do not do well. They say that teachers don't expect the kids to learn, not even in the classroom. And they also condemn their neighbors for not understanding the link between learning and earning. They say that some people want their kids to go to school just so they can keep claiming benefits for them, and that if a child can get a job and earn more than the state allowance brings in, the family pressures the child to leave school and go to work.

A "lurker" in the group suddenly joins the discussion. Oxford is "crap," she says. It has changed since she was young. Oxford means crime today. People push. In the city center, people "behave like cows"; they push, she keeps repeating. I say that many tourists see the city center as a center of culture, studies, and politeness. Her face flushes red with anger. That was a long time ago, she says. Her children have left the city. They worked for BMW but now they are gone. She takes a bus to Melton Keynes to do her shopping to avoid going to Oxford because she feels she is not wanted there; people push her, she says again. Besides, she adds with a sigh, Oxford is too expensive.

The image of Oxford as a center of learning and scholarship becomes distorted when I listen to these people. Is Oxford only a center of scholarship for some? Is the divide between middle-class Oxford and working-class southeast Oxford so immense? Is it possible that Oxford is not that bad for immigrants, not so bad for the working classes? But can they see that? Is the geographical divide responsible for the geography of difference?

*Situated to the right of the botanic garden is a beautiful rose garden. A small, barely noticeable sign explains, "The rose garden was opened in honor of the research workers in this university who discovered the clinical importance of penicillin." I read this and think: How very modest ("research workers"). What typically English understatement.*

The sign refers to the pathologist Howard Florey, a Lincoln College fellow who later became the provost of Queen's College, and the biochemist Ernest Chain, who was appointed as a lecturer in chemical pathology in 1936. These two "research workers," together with Alexander Fleming, received the Nobel Prize for the "discovery of penicillin and its curative effect in various infectious diseases." The first experiment using the drug ended tragically. In February 1941,

an Oxford policeman, Albert Alexander, was scratched on the side of his mouth while pruning roses, and subsequently developed an infection, with huge abscesses that affected his eyes, face, and lungs. The scientists treated him with the drug they had produced, and within five days he had responded well and the infection had started to clear. Sadly, the scientists ran out of the drug; the amount on hand was not sufficient to cure the infection, and the policeman died.<sup>54</sup> This was a tragic end for Mr. Alexander, but by using the drug to treat him, the scientists demonstrated its efficacy, and millions of lives would eventually be saved.

Scholarship and learning are not a selfish journey whose fruits are limited to a particular class. Perhaps these scholarly pursuits are not as democratic and egalitarian as we would like. Still, their benefits empower many. Education in Oxford, as in other places, has changed from being available only to the children of the aristocracy (by birth) to a more meritocratic procedure for granting access, whereby talent, ability, and even a strong desire and readiness to devote oneself to learning are the parameters determining one's chances to receive higher education. At the end of the day, scholarship and learning do empower many. The question that remains regarding Oxford is: how can learning itself and not just the fruits of research be made accessible to ever larger numbers of people?

## THE CITY OF (IN)TOLERANCE

When you last saw me at Tempelhof on May 15, 1956, I was a youngish German woman who spoke good English. Now I guess you can say I am a suburban American lady, a high school teacher staring retirement right in the face, and my good Cedar Rapids neighbours say there isn't a trace of German in my accent. . . . We all have to make our own arrangements with the past.

—Ian McEwan, *The Innocent*, 1989

Contemporary Berlin is perhaps one of the most amazing cities. Tourists come from all over the world, enjoying its spirit of freedom and democracy. For Germans, it is the capital, a growing and united city. For Berlin's residents? Well, many of them would not mind if it were a bit quieter, despite their awareness of Berlin's growing reputation as a center of art, culture, and freedom. In addition to becoming a cultural center, however, Berlin has been engaged in a fascinating project of learning from history, exposing its own residents as well as tourists to the city's past, including the Nazi period and the totalitarian Communist regime in East Berlin. In this process, the city has become a center of tolerance. But if one looks at the city's history, one can easily see that it has enjoyed such glorious periods in the past, and yet this history did not prevent the Nazis from gaining power. In this chapter we ponder how practical this process of learning from the past can be, and what people really learn from history. Is a new political culture enough, or is there a need for some institutional mechanisms to prevent Berlin from deteriorating into a new era of racism and violence?

### COMING TO TERMS WITH THE PAST: VICTIMIZER AND VICTIM

*Berlin, February 2009. Daniel and Avner arrive at the hotel rather late. It is already freezing cold outside. They put their luggage in the room and rush outside to see the city at night. Where should they go? They do not know. There aren't many people outside—Daniel says Europeans are not used to such weather; in Montreal,*

*this would not be considered very cold. He teaches Avner how to “skate” on the frozen snow. For Avner, the visit to Berlin is personal and emotional. In the 1930s, his Jewish father-in-law, then named Freudental, was a student in Berlin. One day in 1933, when he came to work at the Supreme Court, he was stopped by a policeman who told him that Jews were not allowed in. He could not believe it. He asked to see the judge for whom he was working, a liberal person. The judge came out and said, apologetically, “You know this is the law now; I have no choice but to ask you to leave the place.” That same day, Mr. Freudental left Berlin and went to Palestine, where he became a kibbutz member. Since then, neither he nor his wife (a refugee from Vienna) had ever spoken German, either to each other or with others. Mr. Freudental changed his name to a Hebrew one and rarely, if ever, mentioned his past in Berlin. For many years, his two daughters and two sons did not know about his childhood or youth there, or about his studies at the university.*

*In 1989, the city of West Berlin decided to invite all Jews who had been born in Berlin and forced to flee the Nazis to visit the city as its official guests. This, from the perspective of the city, was Vergangenheitsbewältigung, or coming to terms with the past. It was as if the city were saying, “We are facing and acknowledging the harm done in our past; we want to remedy it as much as we can, and the first thing we should do is reunite the refugees with the city.” Avner’s father- and mother-in-law went to Berlin. Interestingly, for Avner’s father-in-law, this gesture and visit were Vergangenheitsbewältigung as well. In many ways, Mr. Freudental was a stereotypical German Jew: rational, reserved, and restrained, never showing his emotions in public. But during this visit he surely was moved. The day he returned from Berlin, he started telling the family many stories about the city, his youth there, his academic studies, his friends who survived, the city’s culture, the Holocaust, and his friends who were murdered. He never forgave in a deep sense, and he felt that this invitation did not atone for what had happened; nevertheless, he was ready to accept that we were living in a new era, that Berlin had taken a long, hard look at its past and that the city had mended its ways. This ironed out the difficulties for him, at least superficially. Avner could feel that, deep in his heart, his father-in-law was happy to be able to long for that familiar city—to feel that it was legitimate, so to speak, to love and cherish his city again. But what do Berliners think about coming to terms with a past during which most of them were not yet born? Should they carry the burden now? Should they be reminded every day about it? Or is this “past being present” a kind of catharsis?*

*Places of Remembrance* is a work of art permanently on view in Berlin’s Schöneberg district. Juliet Koss describes it thus: “The project consists of eighty rectangular street signs, each measuring fifty by eighty centimeters, showing an image on one side and a short text on the other. These were installed in 1993 on lamp-

posts in the streets surrounding Bayerischer Platz, a neighborhood that eighty years ago was home to many upper middle-class assimilated Jews. . . . They consist of mostly anti-Semitic decrees from the years between 1933 and 1945, ranging from shockingly trivial curtailments of civil liberties to more famous draconian measures. Masquerading as traffic signs on residential streets or as shop signs in commercial areas, the signs flirt with camouflage, fading into their environment, and reappearing with unexpected force.”<sup>1</sup> The first sign Koss discusses reads, “Poles and Jews will not be heard in court against Germans.” Freudental’s experience comes to mind. Avner keeps asking himself: How could Freudental’s supervisor, the liberal judge, live with this? Outside a contemporary local market is a sign picturing a loaf of bread; the other side of the sign reads: “Jews in Berlin may buy groceries only in the afternoon between 4 and 5 P.M.” And there are others: “Aryan and non-Aryan children are prohibited from playing together,” “Suspend Jewish teachers from schools in Berlin,” “Ban Jews from using public transportation.”

*Tomorrow morning, Daniel and Avner will pass Ben-Gurion Street, which is named after Israel’s first prime minister. It is located in one of the main areas of the city, near the house of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, and near the Sony Center. Ben-Gurion Street is continued by Yitzhak Rabin Street. Avner feels this gesture is touching: renaming main streets after leaders of your former victims; Daniel wonders if other cities have done this, too. Maybe, but at the moment they can’t think of any other examples.*

Berlin decided to name the street after Rabin during a 2004 conference on anti-Semitism. Daniel and Avner imagine two Berliners saying, “Let’s meet at the junction of Rabin and Ben-Gurion streets and go to the opera.” But is this reconciliation? Coming to terms with the past? What is the difference between those two terms? Will Kymlicka and Bashir Bashir, following Lawrie Balfour and Paul Muldoon, suggest that there is an ambiguity in the talk about reconciliation. In its everyday meaning, they write, reconciliation involves the effort to restore a previous state of harmony or amity. They call this “restorative reconciliation.” Yet in many actual cases, the intention is not to restore any kind of relationship but rather to create the right relationship. In fact, the original relationship should *not* be restored, as it involved oppression, denial, and misrecognition.<sup>2</sup> Kymlicka and Bashir call this “transformative reconciliation.” It is meant to transform a society into a new, egalitarian one.

It seems that in the case of Berlin (which, surprisingly, Kymlicka and Bashir do not discuss in this otherwise most interesting and profound book), coming to terms with the past involves both restoring some kind of relationship and

creating a new one. The relationships that are meant to be restored are that between non-Jew and Jew in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and those that existed in Berlin prior to its division into Communist East and democratic West. Yet at the same time, a new relationship must be created: a new way for Jews and non-Jews, and East and West Berliners, to relate to one another. Although Jews and East Berliners did not at all suffer the same fate, what is common to both cases is that the trauma was too immense to overlook or ignore. Put differently, it is impossible to simply restore relationships—rather the city must carefully build new ones. Yet the new ones cannot be created in a vacuum; there is a context—the Holocaust in one case; the division of the city and the accompanying hostilities in the other—in other words, the past. Thus, the new relationships must keep the past in mind in order to avoid repeating it. Contemporary Berliners learn every day from the past. In Kymlicka and Bashir’s terms, the restorative dimension of reconciliation seeks to restore and heal a preexisting “we,” whereas the transformative dimension seeks to create a new “we,” which requires opening up new possibilities that did not previously exist. For contemporary Berliners, this implies that Jews and East Berliners are now part of what constitutes the new Berlin.

Is the aim of reconciliation to rebuild a different German *nation*? The answer is not clear. As argued later, what has happened in Berlin has not happened in other German cities such as Munich (or at least, this is what we have heard from local residents, Berliners), so this is how reconciliation is conceived by Berliners. Yet one could argue that Berlin is obsessed with redefining and rebuilding its distinctive citizenships, or with redefining what it is to be a Berliner. So perhaps what is happening in Berlin is aimed at city building rather than nation building. It is interesting to note that several reconciliation theorists have argued that reconciliation cannot substitute for the political process of nation building, and that the most it can offer is healing for a specific violation of human rights. This is an argument that reconciliation is nothing but a legal process aimed at recognizing people’s human rights, and that is what many Berliners seem to be interested in. So two goals exist side by side in Berlin: Berlin acknowledges the tremendous violation of human rights of Jews (and other groups such as homosexuals and Roma) during the Nazi regime and of citizens of East Berlin under Communist control. But they also wish to rebuild the city—perhaps not the nation, but the citizenship of the city.

It is clear that since the two processes—restorative and transformative reconciliation—are taking place side by side in Berlin, with the goals of city building and healing from human rights violations, what is happening in Berlin is much more complex than the process called “reconciliation” in many other places. If this is so, it is clear why Berlin needed the new term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.

## TOLERANCE OR INDIFFERENCE?

*It is still Daniel and Avner's first night in Berlin, and it is very cold. They reach the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, built between 1891 and 1895. Severely damaged during World War II,<sup>3</sup> it still looks like a wounded animal: dark, broken, and yet not ready to give up. Indeed, its main section serves as a memorial hall.*

Churches and other places of worship should not be bombed. Why did human beings kill on behalf of God? How did they reach a point where they demolished in the name of eternity? The simple answer is that there was no other way; the churches were bombed as part of the effort to defeat the Nazis. This is doubtless true, yet when one looks at films showing Berlin immediately after the war,<sup>4</sup> one cannot help but question whether the scope of the damage—70 percent of Berlin's houses were demolished—was necessary. Perhaps it was (we do not want to be judgmental), but because of the massive bombing the entire city had to be rebuilt.

The worshippers at the Kaiser Wilhelm Church now hold services in a modern, round building, which is reminiscent of a bunker. Is this irony? Does it remind people who come to pray there that war could come at any minute if they do not do everything in their power to stop it? Peace and brotherhood, it seems, are like marriage: you have to work at them, give them sustenance so they don't wither. Tolerance is fragile. If that is Berlin's message—that tolerance must be sustained and nourished for it to live—then the essence of Berlin's message is captured in that church with its torn roof.

*The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is a most moving place. It is very near the heart of Berlin, the Brandenburg Gate. This is no coincidence. A huge area is covered by 2,771 concrete stelae, most of which are taller than a human being. Daniel and Avner walk through this area. When they reach the place, it is covered in white snow, a hair-raising contrast with the black and grey stelae. As they walk, they immediately feel lost. When one walks among the stelae it is quite impossible to keep a sense of direction. They finally reach the entrance to the information center, designed like an underground bunker beneath the stelae. The center supplies personal information about victims of Nazism. Letters from victims; the life stories of Mr. and Mrs. Blaut, of Mr. and Mrs. Rado. The victims have faces and life stories; they become particular individuals. But the most astonishing moment comes when Daniel and Avner enter the second room. Slides of letters thrown from trains by Jews who were deported to the camps are shown on the floor. The room is dark, and when they enter, it takes them a minute or two to get used to the darkness. People move slowly from one slide to the other to read the letters; hence, at any given mo-*



*ment most visitors are standing in silence, their heads bowed as they read.<sup>5</sup> It is as if the entire room and all the people in it are standing for a minute of silence in memory of the victims. When they leave, Avner and Daniel look again at the sign at the entrance to the information center, with Primo Levi's famous aphorism: "It happened; therefore it can happen again. This is the core of what we have to say."*

Tolerance is a tricky concept. It has been used in various ways, so we need to define what we mean by it. Sometimes tolerance refers to "the conditional acceptance of, or non-interference with beliefs, actions or practices that one considers to be wrong but still 'tolerable,' such that they should not be prohibited or constrained."<sup>6</sup> Notice that, accordingly, the values or behavior of the tolerated party are thought to be "wrong" or "bad." This is not the kind of toleration we mean here. Although we focus on beliefs, values, norms, culture, and behavior (rather than on political views, for example) as the object of toleration, as well as on the people holding them, we do not assume that the beliefs or norms are thought to be "bad." Suffice it for them to be substantially different from the ones held and practiced by the tolerant party. The relevant boundary, in our way of using the term here, is not between the values and norms one finds "good" and those one finds "bad," but rather between the values and norms of the tolerant party and those of the tolerated party. It is therefore a concept closely related to identity.

Indeed, in the history of Berlin the issue of tolerance was a question of who was a genuine Berliner, or Prussian, or German.<sup>7</sup> Thus, our use of the term goes hand in hand with what Michael Walzer calls the fourth and fifth attitudes of toleration: "openness to the others, curiosity; perhaps even respect, a willingness to listen and learn; and further along the continuum, there is the enthusiastic endorsement of difference; an aesthetic endorsement, if difference is taken to represent in cultural form the largeness and diversity of God's creation or of the natural world; or a functional endorsement, if difference is viewed, as in the liberal multiculturalist argument, as a necessary condition for human flourishing."<sup>8</sup>

The latter is therefore called "esteem toleration," when people of different beliefs and cultures not only respect one another's right to lead their lives as they want but also feel ethical esteem for those cultural forms.<sup>9</sup> Apparently, this is how Berliners would like to see their tolerance today.

*Daniel and Avner walk back to their hotel. To their surprise, opposite the church on Hardenberg Strasse they see a museum of pornography, the Erotik Museum. This could not happen in Jerusalem, Avner notes. There might be tolerance for pornography (or there might not be), but to put a museum of pornography next to the city's most famous church? Is Berlin teaching us that tolerance has no limits? That you are*

*either absolutely tolerant or not tolerant enough? Isn't this going too far? Does this truly respect the sensibilities of religious people?*

Prima facie, what is the problem? By placing the sex museum where they did, the city planners were showing that they were modern, progressive, lacking prejudices, or, if you like, liberal. A liberal city tolerates everything, including pornography. Yet, on second thought, whom was the city tolerating? Liberals? Consumers of pornography are not necessarily open-minded and liberal. On the contrary, they abuse women; they objectify them. So, is the act of placing the Erotik Museum next to the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church a sign of tolerance or of *indifference*? Does it imply that Berlin is at its peak of tolerance, or does it imply that Berlin is not sensitive enough?

Come to think of it, Berlin's history is dialectic: peaks of tolerance and openness, followed by dark periods when the city accepted horrific behaviors, satanic activities, which rapidly lead to intolerance. To counter that, the city then opened itself to Jews, or Roma, or gays before slipping once more into intolerance.<sup>10</sup>

*Two days later, Daniel and Avner interview Alex, a graduate student at Potsdam University and an East Berliner, in a café in the main quarter of Berlin, Mitte. "Berliners are not tolerant," Alex says. "We are indifferent. We turn a blind eye. We do not mind other people's business."*

Does tolerance blur into indifference? No doubt, the city wants people to be tolerant and open rather than indifferent. The city repeatedly reminds people of what happened here. The street signs it installed around Bayerischer Platz are just one, albeit controversial, example.<sup>11</sup> We hope that Berliners are not indifferent when they see these; we hope that they are not oblivious to their existence. But what does it mean when a city shows respect for pornography and puts a museum of eroticism next to a church, or (we now notice) opposite the main train station?

Indeed, while visiting Berlin and studying its history, you may be bothered by a particular question. It seems that Berlin has experienced fluctuations in its level of tolerance. At times it was the most tolerant city in Europe; yet it often declined into a center of intolerance. What is it that makes this city switch attitudes so radically? Reading the history of Berlin, one readily notices that the city has gained tremendously from its tolerant periods. Policies of tolerance brought cultural prosperity and affluence, whereas periods of intolerance were detrimental to its growth. For example, during the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), which was rooted in mutual intolerance between Protestants and Catholics, the Brandenburg region (of which Berlin was the capital) lost one-third of its citizens.

In fact, Berliners learned their lesson immediately. After the Thirty Years' War, Friedrich Wilhelm, the elector of Brandenburg (1620–88), decided that free immigration would boost his economic policies. In 1661, he issued a number of edicts easing restrictions on immigration.<sup>12</sup> This led to a wave of newcomers: immigrants who had suffered from religious persecution in their native countries. Indeed, ten years later, a group of Jews exiled from Vienna settled in Berlin. Historians now refer to it as the first Jewish “community” in Berlin. This wave of openness continued: by the year 1700, there were 114 Jewish families and more than a thousand Jews in Berlin. In 1677, Berlin became home to more than seven hundred Huguenots, Protestant refugees from France. The Edict of Potsdam, issued in 1685, facilitated the immigration of twenty thousand Huguenots within three years, most of whom settled in Berlin. The Edict granted them ten years of tax-free status, allowed them to hold church services in French, and generally encouraged them to immigrate to Prussia. Before 1739, around twelve hundred Bohemians settled in Berlin to escape religious persecution. So tolerance and openness were perhaps instrumental for growth and had their roots in pragmatic considerations, but they were also promoted on moral grounds.<sup>13</sup> These immigrants all had their impact: in 1740, Berlin became a center of the Enlightenment. Important new cultural buildings were built, such as the Opera Palace (1737), the Staatsoper Opera House (1742), and the Old Library (Alte Bibliothek, 1780). In 1764, the first German-language theater opened in Berlin on Behrenstrasse. Until then, plays had been performed only in foreign languages, usually French. With the support of Friedrich the Great (king of Prussia between 1740 and 1786), Berlin tried to develop into an intellectual center. Even Voltaire, the French philosopher of the Enlightenment, lived there between 1750 and 1753.<sup>14</sup> This intellectual milieu attracted citizens interested in science and literature to Berlin. With the relaxation of censorship, new journals could be published.<sup>15</sup> After the death of Friedrich the Great, however, his successor, Friedrich Wilhelm II, introduced heavy censorship rules and Berlin once again became a city of intolerance. Liberals were persecuted.

#### ARCHITECTURE, TRANSPARENCY, DEMOCRACY, AND OPENNESS

*Their first morning in Berlin, Daniel and Avner awaken early. Flakes of snow—or is it sleet?—dance gently outside the window. A beautiful “Welcome to Berlin” scene. Avner hurries outside to find an open café and comes across one that is part of a chain—or at least it seems so at first sight. The coffee is surprisingly good and the atmosphere very like many other cafés: soft international jazz, large pictures on the walls. Initially, the café reminds him of Starbucks, which makes him a bit uncom-*

*fortable. But then Avner notices something different: the armchairs are not placed around tables. Instead, they are placed in a large circle so you can face other people. It reminds him of coffeehouses seen in Arab cities, where it is all about discussion and meeting other people.*

Theorists of “deliberative democracy”—who focus on processes of deliberation involving all citizens, usually before, but also after policies are designed, and who see the value of democracy in its openness and comprehensiveness rather than in the idea of majority rule—often claim that one of the advantages of deliberative democracy is its inclusivity. Deliberative democracy tends to embrace minorities, newcomers, immigrants, or groups (such as women, gays and lesbians, ethnic minorities, and poor people) that have been denied, whether by law or in practice, full rights of participation. Yet, argues Bashir Bashir, when serious historical injustice is involved, demands arise relating to the *collective memory* of exclusion and to taking responsibility for what happened as a precondition for any genuine sense of inclusiveness and deliberation. Deliberative democracy’s inclusiveness alone, therefore, may not work to achieve a sense of participation and democracy. Then the politics of reconciliation is in place, so that these minority groups may overcome the collective memory and strive to participate in the political process while those previously denying minorities’ rights change their attitude. But it should not simply be a policy; it should genuinely change people’s minds. It should transform racists into nonracists, chauvinists into egalitarians, and xenophobes into citizens of a “rainbow nation.”<sup>16</sup>

There is, then, a very optimistic assumption at stake: that this process of transforming people’s views, ideologies, and characters is possible and doable. It assumes, then, that people are racist, xenophobic, or prejudiced only because circumstances have led them to hold these views; and therefore if you change the circumstances and create the right environment, people’s behavior will improve as they adopt or develop different ideals. This somewhat Marxist theory is at the basis of Berlin’s “coming to terms with the past.”

Do Berliners like discussing and arguing about culture, art, and politics in cafés? This is a crucial question, because for Berliners really to be able to transform their city, they need this openness, this curiosity to listen to others. Many Berliners are famously proud of their *Berliner Schnauze* (endearing Berlin bluntness).<sup>17</sup> They are notorious for “having it,” whatever it is. They don’t think they need to smile when serving you; they don’t think it’s a beautiful day (as the English often say when they greet you on the street), and the bus driver doesn’t think he ought to let you know where to get off. There is currently a campaign to persuade Berliners to improve their attitude, but they see *Berliner Schnauze* as authentic and frank. Then again, is *Berliner Schnauze* another form of insen-

sitivity or indifference to others' feelings, or is it just part of their tolerance? An Israeli Avner knows who visited Berlin just after visiting the United States said that it was good to experience people who were honest about what they felt rather than trying to pretend. Perhaps.

*Daniel and Avner decide to check this out later and begin making their way by foot toward the city through the Tiergarten, a huge and by now snow-covered park.*

*The snow turns to rain and Daniel seems slightly disappointed. But when they enter the Sony Center, his mood lifts: it seems full of light and very hospitable. It is a huge complex combining different functions: residential, entertainment, business, food, art. Buildings are linked by a huge domed roof made of seven glass and steel structures. This creates a light-flooded floor. Its transparency allows in a lot of light even though it is a cloudy day. Although the cafés in this place are not cheap, there is the sense that the place is accessible. People pass through on their way to and from different parts of Berlin. It gives you a sense of success: fantastic original architecture, good restaurants, cinemas, culture, and prosperity. For a moment, Daniel and Avner forget about the hard economic times the world is experiencing. They have a friend with them: Qian Jiang, a brilliant and talented Chinese scientist and polymath. Having earned his PhD in physics at Harvard, he is now doing postdoctoral research in Munich. When Avner tells Daniel that the building appears responsible for his change in mood, Jiang expresses skepticism: we can design buildings to express certain moods and values, but can they really change our moods, perhaps even our values? Can they "educate" Berliners?*

Perhaps proving the latter would be difficult. At most, we can rely on an aggregation of subjective feelings, people's testimony about how they learned to behave or to hold certain values by living next to, or in, particular buildings. If buildings cannot educate us, then maybe, more plausibly, they can at least affect our moods. This is very intuitive and reasonable. If so, then Berlin's efforts to design transparent buildings are only an attempt to promote "tolerance lite," and the real key to changing values lies in the educational system or perhaps the family. Yet, it would not be far-fetched to argue that living in particular surroundings for a long time can influence people to adopt the values these buildings express.

The Sony Center is located in the heart of Potsdamer Platz, about one kilometer south of the Brandenburg Gate. When the central train station opened in 1838, this was one of the busiest urban traffic centers of Europe, becoming busier still after the Empire was formed in 1871 and with the growth in Berlin's population between the two world wars. In the 1920s, Potsdamer Platz was the busiest square in Europe, with S-Bahn and U-Bahn urban railways, twenty-six

tramlines, and five bus routes passing through it. Twenty thousand cars took this route every day, and eighty-three thousand travelers and commuters were counted at Potsdamer Railway Station on a single day.<sup>18</sup> In fact, one of Europe's first traffic lights was installed here in 1924. Speaking of which, Berliners are rather proud of their *Ampelmännchen*, the human figure icon designed by Peglau in 1961 to show pedestrians when to cross, which is now found throughout the city, though once it was seen only in East Berlin, in the former German Democratic Republic.<sup>19</sup> It is striking that the one thing East Berlin bequeathed to the entire city involves behavior control: over traffic and especially pedestrians. Is this because control and order are important in this city?

*A sign at the entrance to the newly built Academy of Arts, which prides itself on being open, democratic, and transparent, reads, "Please proceed in an orderly fashion." Daniel and Avner find the sign's request bizarre. With all of the Academy's openness, democracy, and transparency, can't it rid itself of the German admiration for order? But then they realize that the sign is deliberately provocative. The theme of the Academy's exhibition is control and instilling fear. In a way, the Academy is playing with Berliners' feelings, causing them to behave in a way that, it is now believed, led them astray seventy-five years ago.*

To return to the Sony Center and the Potsdamer Platz: in World War II, the Platz was completely destroyed and remained abandoned and empty for many years. The Berlin Wall was built here, and the area became a symbol of the gap between the two systems, East and West. No wonder, then, that in 1990, following the reunification of Germany and Berlin, this place was chosen as one of the first sites to be rebuilt. It again functions as the heart of the city. It was perhaps the most rapidly and massively restructured neighborhood or plaza in the world. The nineteen buildings in this "district," as it is called in official websites, were designed by an international team of architects. The fact that the design team that designed Berlin's center, its heart, was international is emphasized repeatedly to demonstrate how far Berlin has come and how much it has changed. The lead architect, Renzo Piano, "wanted to create a European city district and gave the area a distinctive look with the terracotta frontages he developed specially for Potsdamer Platz."<sup>20</sup> One cannot help but wonder at this dramatic change from being the center of German particularism and chauvinistic nationalism to being the most progressive city in the state, and arguably one of the most progressive and cosmopolitan cities in Europe.

The construction time allocated to the project was four years. When one looks at the photos from that period, one can imagine the sense of a "new era" of hope that passersby must have felt upon seeing the number (we counted four-

teen!) of cranes.<sup>21</sup> A city can retell itself, can reshape its own narrative when such huge sums are invested and when such positive energy is expressed.<sup>22</sup> And in terms of positive energy, the city is very proud of the ecofriendly building. Even its roofs are used to collect rainwater.<sup>23</sup>

*This building is a surprise. It is as modern, perhaps postmodern, as buildings can get. Most Berliners are conservative in their taste. Not in their political opinions—before World War II, the socialists and communists had the majority of Berliners' votes and the city hosted revolutionary figures such as Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, members of the underground Spartacus League—but in terms of their lifestyle. Or so they tell Daniel and Avner of themselves. They sit in the same café or bar they did yesterday and tend to dislike it when their habits are disrupted. One interviewee told Daniel and Avner that in 1994, as a child from East Berlin, he moved to a school in West Berlin but the children wouldn't accept him. They bullied him because he was from the East. An architecture student suggested that Berliners are conformists. A third young interviewee from neither Berlin nor Germany told Avner and Daniel the following story: He regularly went to a café on Oranien Strasse in Kreuzberg that served a large clientele of immigrants and foreign students. The waitress kept addressing him in German, to which he replied in his (at the time) broken German. Some days later, she suddenly addressed him in perfect English. Astonished, he asked her why she hadn't spoken in English earlier. She replied that she hadn't thought of it, but the day before the café owner had told her that because so many foreigners came to the café, perhaps she should speak to them in English. This, he says, is typical of Berliners: they are not necessarily conformists, but they do accept the order of things unquestioningly until they are advised to do something else.*

*Of course, one should qualify this generalization, because in Berlin you can also find anarchists and people with "alternative" lifestyles. Daniel and Avner also learned that this generalization doesn't apply to all Berliners. For example, social science students at Humboldt University are highly skeptical; they doubt what their books say, raise questions, and challenge the theories they study. All the same, Berliners in general, interviewees reported, tend to lack self-confidence. Does this lead to an acceptance of things as they are? Or maybe to radical innovation and openness? Or maybe to both?*

#### RETELLING HISTORY

*Daniel and Avner walk east on Leipziger Strasse. They reach the site of the former headquarters of the Soviet occupying forces. Here for the first time they encounter Berlin retelling its history.*

We ought to say something about “retelling” history. Retelling history is completely different from “rewriting” history. The latter often has negative connotations of manipulation, whereas to us the concept of “retelling” has positive connotations. It is not a manipulative practice; on the contrary, it is very straightforward. Rewriting can cover up, hide, and deceive. It aims to prevent the younger generation from learning the ugly stories and discovering the facts. Retelling, on the other hand, is about exposing the younger generation to the stories even if they show the storyteller, or a body associated with the storyteller, in a terrifying light. Thus retelling history is about mending one’s ways, atoning for the commission of past evils, making redress. It therefore starts with asking questions, exposing the reader and listener to the naked truth. In that sense it is about transparency, like Berlin’s contemporary architecture.

*If contemporary architecture in Berlin is about transparency, the Soviet headquarters building is the opposite: it is massive and has an abiding sense of power. Don’t get us wrong: those who view it do not sense their own power; they sense that the building has power over them, and they are powerless. On one wall you can still see the 1950 mural by Wolfgang Ruppel, who used realism to depict the workers as joyful and loyal to the Communist Party. But next to the building the municipality shows an exhibition to educate the younger generation about the events of June 16 and 17, 1953.*

The events in question took place in East Berlin following discontent with the East German regime, especially its demands for increased “production quotas,” already a much-hated practice. The campaign was only possible because of Stalin’s death. A strike—an illegal political act then, involving thirty-six thousand workers—was announced, but when the strike turned into a march and a demonstration, Walter Ulbricht, East Germany’s leader, called for Soviet assistance. And it came, with tanks. Demonstrators were shot, forty were killed, and thousands were arrested.<sup>24</sup>

*Daniel and Avner stand, looking at the photographs and reading the retelling of history: “The workers were increasingly prepared to strike for their demands. . . . The party and state leadership responded to the growing dissatisfaction with a brutal campaign of political persecution. . . . [The authorities] exercised dictatorial power.” The demonstration, which certainly was very brave, is described as spontaneous, popular, and just. Their demand is described as a demand for freedom. Was it just about freedom, or were there other considerations? Did they have a clear idea of what freedom means?*





Transparent walls as a symbol. Parliament building, Berlin. Photograph © Cardaf. Courtesy of Shutterstock.

*Two days later, Daniel and Avner pass the Soviet Memorial site, west of the Brandenburg Gate. Although it is covered with snow, it is visited by dozens of tourists, Germans included. Someone has laid flowers at the entrance. The retelling of history here is straightforward. Showing respect to those who were killed violently as well as keeping alive the memory of the break with civilization represented by Nazi rule is important for the way Germany views itself historically.*

We have called this “retelling” rather than rewriting history, and we have said that it is about transparency, knowledge, and empowering the younger generation to ask questions. Yet something in the language bothers us. Perhaps it is because those who are retelling are using the same language and adjectives, very dramatic and pompous, that were used in the past—only this time, it is for a good cause. We also consider the dozens of explanations in museums and on street corners, or near the houses of Jews who were deported to Auschwitz: as explanations, they are very detailed and pedagogic. But they are polemical and blunt, allowing the reader no space to reflect independently on what she has seen. A note in the German History Museum describes the eighteenth century as follows: “The time had come to think critically and rid oneself of authoritarian beliefs and all forms of prejudices.” Daniel calls this a “totalizing critique of authoritarianism.” In other words, Berliners often seem to have a habit of replacing one extreme ideology with its opposite. One wonders whether this really constitutes critical thinking and the quest for liberation from prejudice.<sup>25</sup>

Now, this habit could serve an obvious purpose. Coming to terms with the past, like any process of reconciliation, must involve creating a new collective memory. The problem of divided memory, with different sections of society having different memories from the past or different images of what happened, either because they interpret it differently or because they focus on different topics, themes or even events, must be an obstacle to a city (as a whole) in coming to terms with its past.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the city seeks a collective and unambiguous ideology in order to bring about a new ethos. At the same time, however, the particular ethos they are interested in—tolerance and coming to terms with the past—requires pluralism and maybe even ambiguity. In places where liberalism and democracy were burned, literally, shouldn’t citizens work to defend them by all means, including encouraging pluralism, self-reflection, and criticism, rather than imposing clear-cut ideologies? We return to the issue of pluralism later.

*Opposite Humboldt University, the first university built in Berlin, there is a square known as Bebel Platz. It was so named in 1947, after August Bebel, one of the founders of the Social Democratic Party. Here, Daniel and Avner imagine the many demonstrations, gatherings, and debates that took place in the Platz in the 1870s.*

In 1875, the Socialist Workers Party of Germany was founded here in Berlin. This is the party that later renamed itself the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD). Three years after the party was founded, it was outlawed. This marked the beginning of intolerance toward socialists and supporters of workers’ rights. All SPD publications and meetings were outlawed as well, and party members were named “enemies of

the German Reich.” This lasted for twelve years, after which the pendulum swung, workers regained their rights, and the party was legalized once more. As always in Berlin when tolerance and openness replace intolerance, this was marked by enthusiasm, and the workers felt on top of the world. In 1890, Berlin celebrated its first May Day celebration and an absolute majority of Berliners voted for the Social Democrats in the Reichstag elections. Another swing of the pendulum, and on May 10, 1933, in this very Platz, the Nazis burned twenty thousand books by socialist and Jewish authors.

*When Daniel and Avner reach Bebel Platz, it is covered in snow and there is a strong wind. Few people cross the Platz. The trees look naked and shivering with cold on the other side of the street. The atmosphere is sad. In the middle of the square is a memorial. Daniel and Avner stand there: under their feet, on the very site of the Nazi book burning, is a conceptual artwork, an understatement designed by Michael Ulman, an Israeli artist. What they first see is a heavy glass plate underfoot, a transparent panel covering an underground room with bookshelves large enough for twenty thousand books. The books are missing.<sup>27</sup> The snow makes it hard to see; the room is blurred. Avner recalls another visit to the place, when he together with other visitors looked at the glass and what they saw first was a reflection of their own faces, as if the artist was saying, “Please, do not forget: it was human beings who burned the books.” Less than a meter away from the glass plate, this window in the floor, is a plaque with the words of the poet Heinrich Heine from 1820, “Where books are burned, in the end people will be burned.” But in this place books are not burned anymore. In the center of the square, in the snow, stands a group of people from all over the world, remembering the awful event. Daniel and Avner counted seven different languages being spoken around them in the first five minutes they stood there: Spanish, French, Italian, German, English, Hebrew, and Japanese. The place legitimizes all these languages, all these nationalities and identities. The very place in which xenophobes and fascists burned the idea of Enlightenment is today cosmopolitan and international. But everybody standing there shivers in the cold, and they smile to one another before going in search of a café or restaurant to escape the icy weather.*

*Daniel and Avner enter Café Einstein on Markgrafen Street. It is not the original one; the original one—which Avner visited on another trip to Berlin and enjoyed very much—was at 58 Kurfürsten Street. That was the place for artists, bohemians, students, and intellectuals craving good, strong continental coffee. The café Daniel and Avner enter, a tiny place on a street corner, is vivid and full of joy. A woman comes in with her small son, who climbs up on a chair and points to the cake he desires, and gets some hot chocolate as well. The place is warm and cozy, pleasant and relaxing.*

## TRANSPARENCY AND COMING TO TERMS WITH THE PAST

“Few buildings, if any, can match the transparent architecture of the new glass-fronted building, designed by Behnisch & Partner with Werner Durth, for its defiant demonstration of openness, motivated not least by the willingness of the country’s foremost association of artists to argue its case and stand its ground.” This assertion opens the little booklet on the Akademie der Künste (Academy of Art).<sup>28</sup> This astonishing building is transparent, “granting [pedestrians] a view into the inside of the building.”<sup>29</sup> The transparency is not without reason. The building stands on Pariser Platz, a glaring contrast with the many buildings around it: the U.S. embassy, the British embassy, a bank, all are closed to the public or restrict entrance. This building stands out “like a truculent exclamation mark proclaiming the freedom of the arts,” the booklet continues. “While most people do not have access to the bank and embassies that line the square, they do to the Academy; it is bent on being part of public life. It deliberately extends an invitation to people to come in and look around the interior of the building, with its passageway, bistro, bookshop, reading room, and exhibition rooms.” When the Berlin Wall fell, the city decided to redesign the Platz. Obviously, respect had to be paid to the Brandenburg Gate, yet those designing the Academy building wished it to stand out from the rest.

*Daniel and Avner enter the building on a gloomy morning; it is drizzling and gray outside. Once again they notice how this transparent architecture affects their mood: transparent architecture and light make people feel more optimistic. There is time before the organized tour of the exhibition, so they climb to the first floor, which is above the cafeteria. The smells of coffee and cakes are cheerful, but the art on the walls is very pessimistic. One picture shows a group of shapes reminiscent of cages. One cage has a door to something that looks like a lighter room, but when they look at it closely they see that it is more like another, bigger, cage. Another picture shows the Pariser Platz, where the Akademie der Künste stands. There are six pieces of art floating outside the building, but each is held like a flag by a person—perhaps an artist?—who stands in the midst of a huge crowd. One of these flags or pieces of art depicts the same door mentioned above. The hundreds of people in the crowd all look exactly the same. Conformism? Although a brave few unfurl the works of art, at the end of the day the general public remains conformist. The booklet goes on, “[The building] does not put up any barriers, nor does it try to hide anything. It is intent on sharing its treasures with others . . . generating openness, . . . [a] highly communicative atmosphere that can be sensed everywhere . . . a breath of fresh air in the heart of the city.”*

*Daniel and Avner join the tour. Their guide, dressed as a bodyguard and carrying what seems to be a gun and several earphones, takes them in an elevator to a cellar, and then to another. The exhibition on control and fear is in the very cellars the Stasi used.*

Nearly all public buildings built after 1990 are transparent or consist of several transparent elements, as if the city is declaring: I have nothing to hide. Daniel's mind springs to a comparison: there is nothing similar in Tokyo. In the center of Tokyo lies the Imperial Palace, which is inaccessible at all times to commoners. In Berlin, transparency seems to be the city's way of acknowledging that the past has become part of its future, that it will always be there and there is no way to hide from it or cover it up. This acknowledgment, which is part of the idea of "coming to terms with the past," is a matter of soul-searching, taking a long, hard look at the past, through architecture. Although this seems to many quite a burden for the residents of Berlin—constantly being reminded of their ancestors' past—transparency and coming to terms with the past can also help one function in a place where evil has been committed.

Now, if "coming to terms with the past" is motivated by Berliners' wish to sit around the campfire singing "Kumbaya," as it were—by their wish to feel less guilt and shame—then the claim that Berliners are more indifferent than tolerant may be accurate. The words of Heiner Müller, the well-known poet, dramatist, and theater director, come to mind: "In order to get rid of the nightmares of history, one must first acknowledge the history, one must know history; otherwise it many haunt you in a very old fashioned way, as a nightmare. One must first realize it, then one can denounce it, and get rid of it."<sup>30</sup>

Did Müller mean literally "getting rid" of the haunting past? It seems more likely that he meant getting rid of the nightmares rather than the past; that is, rather than using denial, Berliners need to learn how to look at the mirror and know who they are and where they come from.

Müller himself was a victim of intolerance. In 1947, at the age of eighteen, he joined the Socialist Unity Party, the governing party of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and enjoyed star status in East Berlin as perhaps East Germany's most important dramatist. In 1959 he won the Heinrich Mann Prize, East Germany's most distinguished literary award. Yet, once he began criticizing the regime he became persona non grata. His play *The Resettler Woman* was censored, a first sign of change in the regime's attitude toward him. After the reunification of Berlin, he regained his status as a leading artist and author until his death in 1995. But he never forgot the time he was boycotted. It also seems that he never forgot the time when he was part of the system. He experienced "com-

ing to terms with the past” not only from the perspective of the victim but equally from the perspective of one who enjoyed and benefited from the system.

Did Heiner Müller realize the evil taking place under the Communist regime? Presumably he was a genuine socialist, devoted to the goal of creating a truly egalitarian society. It seems he did believe that capitalism was the enemy of mankind. That thought does not seem far-fetched when one looks at the contemporary world and the misery in many developing societies, or considers the prevalence of poverty in the developed world. Yet, was he aware of the cost of “actually existing socialism”? The cost, we know, was not just the denial of civil and political freedoms, but also relative poverty compared to capitalist Germany. Did he know about the way the party ruled, about its secret police surveillance, and did he not care about the lack of freedom? Suppose he did. Could it be that the very fact that he was in Berlin made him feel secure, in the sense that in this place evil cannot happen? Could it be that this was the thought that made most Jewish Berliners decide to stay rather than flee, despite the scenes of Nazis marching about the city? Could it be that Mr. Freudental, Avner’s father-in-law, was an exception because he did see through the smokescreen, he was able to understand that a city can be the epitome of tolerance but can still very quickly sink into intolerance and hatred? Presumably, Heiner Müller believed that, since he lived in a city that had just experienced Nazism and risen from the ashes of war to become a center of art and literature, Berlin was a cultured and civilized place, just as it had been in the eighteenth century.

The historian of German culture Matt Erlin argues that the experience of living in Berlin in the eighteenth century provided the model and inspiration for Moses Mendelssohn’s idea of “the vocation of man,” the individual who experiences “balanced development of all one’s physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual capacities in the appropriate measure. . . . Such development becomes possible through social interaction and reaches its highest degree of perfection in a highly developed society,” such as Berlin. Erlin calls this “the philosophy of the city.”<sup>31</sup> Mendelssohn, who is known to have been one of the most liberal and progressive minds in eighteenth-century Jewish philosophy, argued that Judaism did not try to coerce belief but rather to stipulate codes of behaviors; but he extrapolated from this to a more general argument about freedom of belief in general, a position that was progressive even among German Enlightenment scholars of that time. Erlin believes that Mendelssohn’s position grew organically from his experience in Berlin. For example, people in Berlin believed that urbane communication was possible in urban centers such as Berlin, but not in provincial towns. Berliners experienced the city as thrilling and believed the city offered many advantages, including “urban sociability,” the various connections

and relationships one has in the city that support individuals' development. Interestingly, Erlin claims that Mendelssohn's defense of sociability often took the form of refuting Rousseau's attack on the decadence of urban life. Civilization, in its urban form, Mendelssohn thought, allowed new cognitive capacities to emerge. "There is every reason to think that [Mendelssohn's] arguments were written with contemporary urban experience in mind."<sup>32</sup>

*Daniel and Avner meet Ortal, a Jewish Israeli student of architecture at the Technische Universität Berlin, and Ido, a Jewish Israeli student who has been living in Berlin for two years, studying German and working with the SPD. Both these students' grandfathers were born in Berlin and escaped before World War II. Ido's grandfather is, actually, Mr. Freudental, Avner's father-in-law. Daniel and Avner ask the students whether they feel strange in Berlin, and when they answer no, Daniel and Avner push hard: do you feel insecure or threatened in any way because you are Jewish? Ortal's answer is surprising: though she does feel like a stranger from time to time, when she visited her grandfather he asked her to tell him about Berlin, saying that he felt great nostalgia for life there before the Nazis. Jews had been full citizens, and during the Weimar Republic they enjoyed full citizenship rights. Once again, a period of complete tolerance deteriorated into horrific anti-Semitism and intolerance toward Jews, the Roma, and homosexuals. Berlin was the city most tolerant of homosexuals and the first to have an open gay community in the early twentieth century. Yet thousands of Berlin homosexuals were murdered during the war. When Daniel and Avner visited the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, they recalled the oft-cited saying of Friedrich II (1712–86), also known as Friedrich the Great: "Religions must be tolerated and the state must be vigilant that no one does anyone harm because every man must get to heaven in his own way."*

#### PLURALISM BETWEEN AND WITHIN PERSONS

*Daniel and Avner go to see the remains of the Berlin Wall at Niederkirchner Strasse. Here, not far from Checkpoint Charlie, one can still see the remains of the popular symbolic "attack" on the wall, when people started hitting it with hammers.<sup>33</sup> While walking along the wall, Avner receives a text message from someone he and Daniel were supposed to meet the next day.*

When the wall was built, it enforced a total separation that could not be repeated today with mobile phones, email, and other contemporary communications technology. But back then, all telephone lines between the two sections of the city were cut in the early 1950s, and people could phone only via operator-controlled connections through Frankfurt.<sup>34</sup> This improved during the "de-

tente” period, when direct dialing was reintroduced, though East Berliners were conscious of the possibility that their calls were being listened to. Today, the remains of the wall are part of everyday life in Berlin. Some tourists come to see the wall’s remains, but very few Germans pay attention: the fall of the wall is already a fact. So Berliners know that walls can be knocked down. Alex, the Potsdam University graduate student we interviewed, told us that when he went to Israel for a year, he liked traveling between Ramallah, in the Palestinian-controlled territories, and Israel. He would sit in Ramallah and tell his Palestinian friends that he had been in Tel Aviv an hour earlier, and then have coffee with Israeli friends in Tel Aviv and tell them he’d been with Palestinians in Ramallah that morning. “It was about telling them that walls can be torn to pieces,” he told us.<sup>35</sup> But it was also about having *both* Palestinians and Israeli friends. In East Berlin, one had to be totally East Berliner: Communist, anti-American, and loyal to the party; in West Berlin, one had to be totally West Berliner: pro-American and liberal-minded. Now one can be German and Berliner and what have you: socialist, liberal, Communist. There is pluralism among people, but also within them: one can be German and socialist at the same time. Indeed, once again one can be Jewish and German, like Moses Mendelssohn.

The Jewish Museum was designed by Daniel Libeskind. He is a Jewish expatriot Israeli professor of architecture who won the museum design competition. The choice of Libeskind was quite controversial. Rolf Schneider, the author of the museum guide, writes, “Libeskind has called his Jewish Museum project ‘Between the Lines.’ Visitors to the museum will need to try and follow his train of thought here, even though they might find it confusing and exasperating at times.”<sup>36</sup> Edward Rothstein of the *New York Times* was less courteous: “There may be worse Jewish museums in the world than the Jüdisches Museum Berlin, which opened in 2001. But it is difficult to imagine that any could be as uninspiring and banal.”<sup>37</sup>

*When Daniel and Avner visit the Jewish Museum Berlin, they immediately become disoriented and, instead of paying attention to the exhibition, they focus on the claustrophobic feelings it induces. The many documents and objects on display do not attract them. They feel uncomfortable. All they want to do is to leave. But presumably the museum does enlighten people who come better prepared for the experience. Indeed, an interesting thing happens there. Daniel and Avner enter the learning center. Avner looks under “Alleged Ritual Murders” to learn about places and events involving allegations against Jews such as the old myth that Jews murder Christian children and use their blood for their Passover matzos. Jiang, who has joined them, tells Avner that in nineteenth-century China it was quite common to tell such stories about Catholics. Catholics would often save children whose*



*parents had abandoned them, and since some of the children were extremely debilitated, they often died. This led to rumors that Catholics exploited and killed Chinese babies.*

This implies that minorities are too often seen as very different, and stories are told about them. But why such horrific stories? Why demonize minorities? Obviously, some people in the majority group feel so threatened and insecure about their identity that they make up these stories. John Locke taught us that in order to be more tolerant, we need to be more relaxed about our identities and reject the idea that different identities challenge our own. In fact, Locke was suggesting that pluralism is not a threat, but rather the way the world works. Indeed, both contemporary Berlin and Montreal teach us that incorporating minorities and other cultures, rather than considering them threats to our identity, produces a much more inspiring story and, in fact, sustains our own identity.

*That evening, over dinner at Max und Moritz, a restaurant well known to locals in the more multiethnic, multicultural quarter of Kreuzberg, Daniel and Avner reflect about the museum. Avner mentions a Jewish philosopher who was religious. Jiang is skeptical. This cannot be, he argues. A philosopher must be ready to question everything and thus cannot be religious, since being religious means accepting certain dogmas as truth.*

Although Jiang's argument may sound intuitive to many, we believe that one can be both a good philosopher and a religious person. This becomes clear when we realize that the self can be multiple and can accommodate itself to different circumstances. This notion of the self can be found in liberalism, but also in Confucian role ethics—the idea that we should treat people differently according to their roles and the circumstances. It is relevant to this visit to Berlin because acknowledging this internal, intrapersonal (as opposed to external, interpersonal) pluralism is a precondition for tolerance. In fact, when we tolerate somebody, we tolerate not only this person but also the very idea of pluralism—the idea that two or more ideas can coexist simultaneously side by side.

One could challenge this view: isn't somebody who holds two or more possibly contradictory worldviews simply inconsistent? This is often so, and often people are inconsistent because we are only human. It is important to remember this here in Berlin. We are not perfect, and the idea of the perfectibility of mankind was one of the most horrific and dangerous ideas of Nazism. Now, the philosopher's *philosophy* should be consistent and coherent, and indeed consistency and coherence are the parameters by which the philosopher's philosophy is judged; and yet the philosopher herself, as a person, does not have to be consis-

tent and coherent, and, arguably, it is not reasonable and human to expect her to be so. Berlin had a history of trying to achieve unity and consistency in the person rather than in ideas, and perhaps the clearest manifestation of this tradition was Hitler's slogan "Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Führer." This slogan was the basis for the Nazis' intolerance of pluralism, which led to the Holocaust, and, among other things, forced thirteen hundred German writers and artists, many of them Berliners, to leave Germany for foreign countries: Brecht, Schoenberg, and Weill, to name just a few.<sup>38</sup>

Berlin today teaches us that we must accept not only that the world is imperfect in the sense that there are different people with different identities and different beliefs, but also that people themselves are not, and cannot be, perfect.

*The Kreuzberg neighborhood gives the impression of a multiethnic, multicultural area, though Avner and Daniel notice the "multi" is somewhat limited compared, say, to London or New York.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps a better description is "alternative," minus actual alternative people. Still, Kreuzberg is younger, noisier, more colorful, and no doubt more relaxed about its present: there is a feeling of "live and let live"—gays, lesbians, immigrants, a lot of artists, students, and few tourists. The atmosphere in Max und Moritz is charming. The owner welcomes us and leads us to the inner room since all tables in the first room are taken, even at this early hour. An unfinished wooden floor; dark wooden tables, long and heavy; and soft, dim lightening. This is surprising, contradicting, in a way, the image of the two troublemakers, Max and Moritz.<sup>40</sup> Daniel and Avner are led to a table, and they request German red wine, innocently inquiring whether the wine is dry. The owner gives them a look and replies, "The only sweet thing in this restaurant is the owner, and that's me."*

Wry, self-directed humor is perhaps a key factor when a society wishes to cure itself of its past.<sup>41</sup> Knowing how to laugh at yourself seems to be a precondition for coming to terms with the past and acknowledging that you were wrong. Laughing at yourself is admitting that you are not, and cannot be, perfect; admitting, conceivably, that nobody can be perfect. This is the first step toward admitting that you (as a collective) did wrong, especially that you did something terribly wrong. Self-directed humor is quite typical of Berliners. It is part of their casual dress, their pessimism, their attitude never to think an event was just great. There is always a fly in the ointment. When asked what distinguishes them from other Germans, Berliners immediately say: we are never fully satisfied; that's why Berlin will never be a rich city. Or, as the mayor said: Berlin is poor but sexy. We'll come back to this later; however, it should be explained here that not taking oneself seriously, and never feeling that things are absolutely fine, is, in a way, acknowledging pluralism: that life can be good and bad, that it can have different aspects that might not go hand in hand.

## COMING TO TERMS WITH THE PAST: THE COST

*Looking at Humboldt University—a very impressive building on Unter den Linden—Avner and Daniel discuss the wholesale sacking of university professors in East Germany during the reunification after the fall of Communism. Daniel has discussed this point with a journalist from Leipzig, in the former East Germany, where this journalist grew up. The journalist said that many scholars in the former East Germany had been “passive collaborators”—chemistry professors, for example, who reluctantly sat through lessons on Marxist theory, which had nothing to do with their real interests and research. His own supervisor is a well-known professor of Chinese who kept his job after the wall fell because there were few who could teach the language, but, as at Humboldt University, most East German professors were sacked, in what the journalist described as a “witch hunt,” and replaced by less-than-qualified professors from West Germany.*

Humboldt University, Berlin’s first university, founded in 1810, was completely restructured in the early 1990s. Although its status as the “shining star of East German higher education” made many believe that the university’s restructuring would not affect its faculty, when the Stasi files were opened it became clear that at least 20 percent of the university professors had “conspirational” contacts with the Stasi.<sup>42</sup> As noted earlier, Berlin’s way of coping with the need to come to terms with its past is through transparency. We see this in the buildings erected after 1990. But we also see this in the way Berlin has decided to cope with the Stasi files. There were three options: One was to get rid of the files, as a way of forgiving the people who collaborated; the second way was to transfer them to some archive in West Germany, where they would be kept secret or not, but certainly kept away from Berliners; and the third option (the one chosen) was to open the files to the public in Berlin so everyone could see what the files said about them, who the collaborators were, and so on.<sup>43</sup> This is the irony of transparency: it is often cruel. Perhaps Berlin could have allowed people the option to tell half-truths, to sort of lie, in order to avoid public disgrace and dishonor. Perhaps one could say that on some occasions, like this one, not telling the whole truth is part of civilized behavior. But Berliners did not think this was an option with regard to the Stasi files; they thought that secrets and lies led to evil. This is interesting if we bear in mind what Berliners say about themselves, namely, that perhaps they tend to turn a blind eye and ignore things, perhaps they tend to embrace half truths. Nonetheless, transparency as a policy was chosen and given strong public support.

Opening the files revealed what happened at Humboldt University, and the picture was rather gloomy. Hanna Labrenz-Weiss, who studied this case, sum-

marized what it meant for the university: (1) anyone could find out who and what had interfered with their academic careers and personal lives; (2) university employees could be checked for collaboration with the Stasi (a commission of inquiry was set up, which reported its findings to the university, without making any recommendations); and (3) the university's Stasi documents were the first to be made available for historic research. People learned that the Stasi had had a web of organizations and individuals active in the university; it was revealed that some members of the faculty at Humboldt University had been used by the Stasi to monitor and track U.S. citizens living in Western Europe; biotechnologists, microbiologists, chemists, and journalists working in Western Europe; business consultants; students in West and East Berlin; and many other bodies, such as "industrial and research institutions of operative interest" in West Germany. The Stasi had access to all reports and decisions of the university: it checked the ideological and political positions and doings of the scholars to make sure they were toeing the party line. Thus, in the early 1990s, all professors were automatically fired and had to reapply for their professorships, and many of them who had been Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED) members were disqualified and therefore in practice sacked. As mentioned above, only 20 percent of the staff had directly cooperated with the Stasi, but it was known that many more had turned a blind eye to what they saw and heard; moreover, since the Stasi had time to dispose of many documents, there was an atmosphere of suspicion, and hence everybody became a suspect. There was some justification for this atmosphere; for example, most of the university faculty did not take part in the democratic campaigns of 1989 and they had elected the SED member and former Stasi member Heinrich Fink as their director. And yet, what happened after 1990 was clearly a witch hunt.

*Daniel and Avner discuss whether the sacking was justified and whether it was time to replace the entire staff of this university where G.W.F. Hegel, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Arthur Schopenhauer, Heinrich Heine, Karl Marx, Walter Benjamin, and Albert Einstein had all studied or taught. In Berlin, the Society for Sciences was founded in 1700 and Gottfried Leibniz was its first president.<sup>44</sup> In 1911, the Kaiser Wilhelm Society for the Promotion of Science (now the Max Planck Society) was founded in Berlin. But under the Communist regime, the party decided who could attend the university based, among other things, on conformity to party orthodoxy. Lecturers knew this and yet kept silent.*

But could they have behaved differently? Isn't it being insensitive, not to mention unreasonable, to expect them to clash with the regime? Can we really understand what courage it took to confront the authorities? Timothy Garton

Ash, who lived in East Berlin for nearly a year under the Communist regime, reported from East Berlin about the voting experience:

In an East German polling station, a voter presents himself before a board of two or three officials, shows his ID card, and collects a ballot paper. To vote for the National Front [the party that included puppet parties and the ruling Socialist Unity party—AdS and DB] he folds his ballot paper once and drops it, unmarked, into the box. To vote any other way, he has to walk across the room to mark his ballot paper in a voting booth, beside which sits a vopo. A vopo is a “people’s policeman.” The moment the voter steps toward the booth, his name is noted. The consequences may include demotion at work, or, for a student, expulsion from the university.<sup>45</sup>

Ash also discusses this dilemma apropos of the film *The Lives of Others*.<sup>46</sup> He himself lived in East Berlin and years later found out that he had a “minute-by-minute record of my past life: 325 pages of poisoned madeleine.” He tracked down the acquaintances who had informed on him. He writes: “All but one agreed to talk. They told me their life stories, and explained how they had come to do what they had done. In every case, the story was understandable, all too understandable; human, all too human.” One could argue that 1990s German society had a right to sack all these lecturers, since parents did not want people who had cooperated with the Stasi to teach their children. The assumption is that a university lecturer is expected to be a model of intellectual courage, an Educator with a capital E, even when he or she teaches math or chemistry. The fact that a person could turn a blind eye to the lack of academic freedom and to dogmatic research and teaching in the humanities and social sciences implies that this person can no longer serve as an educator. Moreover, in order to prevent totalitarian policies, a state must regulate, and often it must regulate in a way that appears, *prima facie*, illiberal. This view can be challenged, however: such firings would be justified only if the lecturers’ collaboration harmed people or the lecturers lacked decent academic credentials.

Avner discusses this matter with Shlomo Avineri, an Israeli professor and one of the world’s leading scholars on Marx and Hegel, who visited East Berlin in the 1980s and lectured at Humboldt University. Avineri is no fan of the Communist regime, but he tells Avner a story that sheds new light on this dilemma. When he visits Berlin today, he sometimes meets with his pre-1989 acquaintances, members of the GDR Academy of Sciences or the Marx-Engels Institute at the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party. Some of them, as old

Communists, spent years in Buchenwald, and in several cases the people who “purged” them after 1989 were minor officials in the Third Reich.

*Alex, the Potsdam University graduate student mentioned earlier, has no strong opinions about the sacking, but he does emphasize that Humboldt University recently became, at least in the social sciences, a truly Western, liberal institute of higher education, by which he means that it is radically critical.*

*Alex shows Avner and Daniel a building called Tacheles. Tacheles means “down to earth” or “in practice.” Formerly a big department store, it was abandoned until the early 1990s, when artists and bohemians took it over.*

Indeed, Berlin has been an attractive place for artists, especially for alternative ones, perhaps because Berlin art is about challenging frameworks and borderlines. Thus, Berlin artists have dared to do what many artists in other cities did not dare. Bertolt Brecht’s provocative and critical plays were performed at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm in Mitte; the theatrical company that produced his plays was named the Berliner Ensemble. The first DJ–live music show took place in Berlin. Berlin painters felt that their art was not going to be commercial anyway, so they were authentic and devoted themselves to artistic expression. When we interviewed residents, they proudly told us that Berlin’s artists were not commercial. While we were in Berlin, the city was preparing for the 2009 International Art Forum, which would showcase experimental and avant-garde art.<sup>47</sup> The reasons for Berlin’s appeal to alternative, more daring artists were institutional, as well: in fact, already by the 1970s, West Berlin had become a center for those wishing to experiment with alternative lifestyles, living in communes, running left-wing theatrical troupes, and so on.<sup>48</sup> Why? Berliners tell us that one reason for this was that the military draft did not apply to West Berliners until the 1990s (when this West German exemption was canceled with reunification). Before 1990, therefore, young leftists and people seeking alternative lifestyles came to live in Berlin in order to avoid the draft.

*Daniel and Avner sit with Alex and Ido at Strandbad Mitte Café.<sup>49</sup> Alex loves Berlin. He says that the city is dynamic, full of culture, the place to be. When asked about Klaus Wowereit, the mayor of Berlin, saying that Berlin is poor but sexy,<sup>50</sup> Ido laughs and says that perhaps Berlin is sexy, but Berliners cannot be sexy because they behave informally and dress casually. They are not like residents of Munich, laughs Alex. There, if you see you are out of bread in the morning, you put on makeup and only then go outside to get a loaf of bread. In Berlin, you just go out and do what you need to do. But the really good thing, Daniel and Avner suggest, is*

*that this reflects the fact that Berliners accept everything; they accept you as you are, no need to fake anything, no need for makeup. But Alex insists: Berliners do not accept; we are indifferent.*

Alex's point is important. We recall the career of Erich Kästner. After his studies, he moved to Berlin between the two world wars and became a well-known novelist, especially of books for children. His book *Emil and the Detectives* (1929), which was made into a film in 1931, was set in Berlin, as were most of his other books and stories. In 1933, he was in Zurich when the Nazis set fire to the Reichstag; he could have stayed in Zurich, but he returned to Berlin, his beloved city, "in order to be an eyewitness," as he put it.<sup>51</sup> Since his books expressed egalitarian sentiments and he had expressed sympathy for socialism, the Gestapo interrogated him several times, yet released him. Highly respected in Germany, he enjoyed special status, and was allowed to publish his books outside the country. Yet, in 1941 he wrote a screenplay about Baron Münchhausen, which was rumored to have been ordered by the Nazi regime. Kästner's rumored cooperation with Nazi authorities made many people very critical of him after the war. He saw what was being done to the Jews, yet betrayed his own beliefs; he did not criticize the Nazi regime openly. Perhaps it is easy to judge him today—it was harder to survive then if you were a socialist and a pacifist. Nonetheless, he had opportunities to leave Berlin and Germany, but declined to do so.

*More recently, the film *The Lives of Others*<sup>52</sup> explores the Stasi's impact on people's lives in East Berlin. "There was a mentality of I-knew-nothing, I-didn't-see," says Alex. Daniel and Avner recall their visit to the Stasi Museum: they approached a group of four teenagers there. Avner told them about their project and asked if the teens would mind answering a few questions. Daniel and Avner wanted to ask them what they felt in this museum, why they had come, where they were from. They politely refused, saying they were not from Germany, although their accents and the fact that they spoke German among themselves suggested they were. "The Lives of Others was produced in 2006 or so," notes Alex. "It took East Germans seventeen years to openly reflect on what happened here. East German films after World War II did not discuss the Nazis until the 1990s. It was like they didn't notice the Nazis had been here. We Berliners do not look outside ourselves. In Bavaria there is a carnival every year; people dress up. We in Berlin do not celebrate with carnivals—we look inside."<sup>53</sup>*

Is indifference a way of being tolerant? In reality, it could lead to the *appearance* of acceptance but not *genuine* acceptance. But the main problem is that

indifference may lead to acceptance of intolerance. Berliners did not really see what happened to the Jews, the Roma, the Communists. To really see this, one has to be *aware* of what one sees; one has to care about it.

Come to think of it, it may be true that in several periods Berliners have been indifferent. After the reunification, people were thrilled for the East Berliners: they now had freedom; there would be growth, they would get good jobs, they would be rich. But the figures show that in the first years after the fall of the wall, unemployment rose dramatically in East Berlin. Berlin's labor force declined from 1.88 million in 1991 to 1.73 million in 2002; employment fell from 1.69 million in 1991 to 1.42 million in 2002. In East Berlin, the drop in employment was 9 percent in the 1990s, particularly in the early 1990s.<sup>54</sup> When one crosses the former border between the eastern and western parts of the city, one does not notice immediately that these were two different cities, but when one walks further to the east, one can indeed see the dissimilarity.

*As Daniel and Avner walk about the neighborhoods, they observe this dissimilarity. They read the street signs near Unter den Linden, informing Berliners about the buildings that were there before the war and how East Berlin decided to rebuild the area and erect "more luxurious" buildings. Daniel and Avner stare at the buildings: they are dull and look more or less identical. Were people in West Berlin indifferent to the poorer population of East Berlin that was looking for jobs, perhaps losing jobs, perhaps paying the price for the reunification? Was indifference the subtext of the celebrations following reunification?*

*Yet, the people Daniel and Avner meet are not indifferent at all. In fact, they are passionate about their city. To celebrate the end of their visit and perhaps also to escape the rain, Daniel and Avner enter a cozy little restaurant called Maleté, on Chaussee Street. The sign advertises "Anatolische Küche" (Turkish cuisine). They start chatting with the waitress, who is Kurdish; the restaurant is Kurdish-Turkish. She tells them about the various dishes, which ones are "cool," as she puts it, which ones the "locals" (Germans, that is) like, which ones are the chef's specialties. Daniel and Avner are the only guests, apart from one other person who just wants coffee, so they can spend time talking with her. She likes the city and she has been here for quite a while. She proudly shows Daniel and Avner pictures that the chef painted.*

*Earlier on Sunday morning, Avner went looking for a café near the hotel and found a tiny coffeeshop that was open. It had only one table, but a lot of freshly baked cakes, and the coffee was nice and strong. Avner knew: it was Turkish-style coffee. "Are you from Turkey?" he asked the owner, and they started talking. She has been here several years; her daughter was born here. She likes it here. People here are kind and respectful.*



## FREE ME FROM FREEDOM

*Daniel and Avner observe the Bundestag from the memorial site to the Soviet soldiers. Its transparent new dome dominates the building. They imagine what it was like when the Reichstag was in flames, set by the Nazis. They think of the film, shot after 1945, of bombed-out Berlin, with 70 percent of its buildings demolished.<sup>55</sup> The city seems like a victim of violence that tries time and again to rebuild itself. However, the city is not trying to renew its buildings from the past; it is as if Berlin is reminding itself that, unlike many cities in Europe, it lacks old, premodern buildings—and that there is a reason for this. But building new buildings is about constructing a new era. Human optimism has no limits, a feeling surely sensed by the thousands daily who visit the new Reichstag's dome and enjoy this amazing architecture. Daniel and Avner are standing before a memorial site commemorating thousands who died; they think of World War II, in which millions were killed; they see the building that symbolizes and practices sovereignty and was attacked by its own people; they think of March 20, 1933, when all Communist members of parliament were removed, and the next day, when the first concentration camp in the Berlin area was opened, just outside the city, for regime opponents who had been arrested; they think of the campaign "Against the Un-German Spirit," during which boycotts of Jewish businesses, doctors, and lawyers were organized; they imagine the theatrical marches that took place a few hundred meters from here, near the Brandenburg Gate and in the Pariser Platz in 1933. The famous impressionist artist Max Liebermann, a Jewish Berliner, remarked when he saw them from his home nearby, "I couldn't even begin to eat as much as I'd like to be able to throw up."<sup>56</sup> They think how optimistic humans are. Perhaps for a good reason. On the very place where these Nazis marched, carrying evil and hatred in their hearts, now stands the newly built Akademie der Künste, the Academy of Art. This is the same organization whose president for twelve years was Max Liebermann, before he resigned in May 1933, in protest against the way the Academy gave the cold shoulder to liberal forces and betrayed its mission when it expelled many of its members for political or "racial" reasons. Today's building is open, accessible, and transparent. Perhaps, then, there is good reason for optimism. Tolerance will win.*

And yet, if you think about Hegel,<sup>57</sup> Fichte, and Schopenhauer and then think of the Nazi marches, and look around you at the memorial site for the Soviet soldiers, or remember the pogrom of Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass), in which the Nazi paramilitaries SA and SS set fire to nine Berlin synagogues and arrested twelve hundred Jews, taking most of them to the concentration camp opened only eight months earlier—if you consider it all, side by side, perhaps there is cause for pessimism. Intolerance might win. How do we know

that the cycles are over? How do we know that the end of history—Berlin’s history of cycles of tolerance and intolerance—has arrived? How can we be sure that the city is planning and building itself so that an ethos of tolerance and coming to terms with the past will remain dominant?

In the Akademie der Künste there is a poster titled *Free Me from Freedom*.<sup>58</sup> Is freedom a burden too heavy to bear? Will Berliners know how to handle freedom and not ask to be freed from it? The question that has been haunting us since we walked around in Berlin is this: now that it is clear to us that Berlin has known peaks of tolerance and times of radical intolerance, and now that it is clear that contemporary Berlin is a city of acceptance, tolerance, and flexibility, aren’t we simply in an era that is just like that of the Weimar Republic? Suppose, for example, that the current economic crisis gets worse: will it encourage more extremism, as was the case during the 1920s and 1930s? Won’t we wake up in ten or twenty years’ time and see that intolerance is once again dominant in Berlin? Recall Primo Levi’s statement, shown at the entrance to the information center beneath the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe: “It happened; therefore it can happen again. This is the core of what we have to say.” The Berliners we interviewed thought this was plausible, but they also characterized themselves (that is, Berliners) as pessimists, people who never think things are fine. Perhaps they are just *too* pessimistic about themselves.

## THE CITY OF ROMANCE

October 2008. Avner and Daniel arrive in Paris in the midst of what looks like the “final crisis” of capitalism, but nobody in Paris seems to be particularly perturbed. Daniel is frequently on the phone with his wife, who works for a leading U.S.-based investment bank, to check if her company has gone under (at the time, some of the most renowned U.S. companies were bailed out by the U.S. government with a multibillion-dollar loans; a big shock to “capitalist” Americans, but something that would have been almost *de rigueur* in France). The two old friends stay in a small hotel room paid for by Avner’s research grant. They hypothesize that Paris is the “city of romance” and their mission is to roam the streets at random and stumble on some evidence. Avner carries a map, but they prefer to rely on the symmetrical boulevards for orientation. They walk and talk, with breaks in cafés for refreshments (espresso for Avner, wine for Daniel). Finally, a bit of success: they spot a young Mandarin-speaking couple French kissing in public, something they would never dare do in China. Avner and Daniel also spot a waiter in a café kissing a female tourist with a huge backpack. Other than that, however, they are disappointed. They visit the Musée de la Vie Romantique, but it’s an unimposing nineteenth-century house with a few bourgeois artifacts from the time it was occupied by George Sand. They abandon a plan to visit the Parc Monceau, said to have the highest number of kissing couples in Paris. And when they interview their Parisian “subjects” (a professor friend at the prestigious Collège de France, a Canadian writer “in exile” since the 1950s, and two of Daniel’s family members), they are further thrown offtrack: the response to their tentative hypothesis about the Paris ethos ranges from skeptical to hostile. Perhaps the ideal of romance in Paris, like the Hollywood films of two romantic lovers who live happily ever after, is too good to be true? More worryingly, perhaps it’s too true to be good? Even if it’s true, in other words, the consequences of the ethos of romance can be morally problematic, if not downright evil.

Paris, more than any other city, is a city of romantic dreams. Like most dreams, it bears little direct contact with reality. In the case of Paris, it is mainly tourists and short-term visitors who partake of the dream. The locals—meaning

residents, many of whom are born outside of Paris—tend to look askance at such dreams. They are more than happy to vacate the city in August and let tourists take over the center of town. But Parisians often partake of another, somewhat more refined, romantic ethos: an approach to everyday life that devalues the material and glorifies heroic individualism, values tradition over consumerism and moral principles over empirically grounded ways of thinking, and idealizes an anticonformist attitude and a lack of concern for formal social status. This kind of romanticism can be traced to the norms of conversation in the aristocratic salons of prerevolutionary France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the “democratization” of such norms after the French Revolution of 1789, as well as to ideas of romance put forward earlier by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and card-carrying members of the Romantic movement in the nineteenth century. In this chapter, we will trace the historical development of the romantic ethos as it is typically understood by foreigners, followed by an account of the local understanding of romance. We conclude with some questions about the tension between the pursuit of romance and the pursuit of morality.

#### A HOLLYWOOD STORY

*Daniel's father had a soft spot for Paris. He would frequently visit for lengthy periods and several of his writer friends had moved to Paris. He would sit in cafés and write short stories and pieces of journalism that were published in Canada. Toward the end of his life, Daniel's father turned book collector—as he put it, he “learned to judge a book by its cover”—and he unearthed several treasures in Paris's second-hand bookstores. Daniel's father met his second wife (Odile, born and bred in Paris) sitting in a Paris café one day. In the mid-1980s, Daniel was accepted as a graduate student at Oxford and took the opportunity to visit his father in Paris. Perhaps Daniel would also fall in love in Paris? It wasn't to be. But he did set his doctoral thesis (an account of the liberal-communitarian debate written in dialogue form) in a Paris literary café named La Coupole. When Daniel eventually visited La Coupole, he was a bit disappointed. Instead of writers and artists, most customers seemed to be elderly bourgeois couples and English-speaking tourists. Had Daniel seen the short film Montparnasse-Levallois by Jean-Luc Godard in Paris Vu Par (1965)—with a joke sign in the window of “La Coupole” reading, “Reserved for Artists and Intellectuals, Membership Card Obligatory”—he would not have set his thesis in that café. Obviously, La Coupole—and much of Paris—was living off its reputation, and only tourists fell prey to the illusions.<sup>1</sup>*

Paris did not start off as a city associated with romance. Its origins can be traced to the second century BCE, when a tribe known as the Parisii established

themselves on an island in the River Seine, later to become the Île de la Cité. The Roman conquerors named the city Lutetia and it eventually became known as Paris in the fourth century. Under Roman rule, the city spread from its original island to both banks of the river, but it remained a minor trading post. After the Romans withdrew, the city fell into the hands of the Franks before being abandoned to a combination of slow decay and Viking raiders.

In the twelfth century, the Capetian kings of France decided to make Paris their principal place of residence and the city finally began to emerge from obscurity. The presence of the court and its officials helped fuel the Parisian economy and made the city the center of the political life of the French kingdom. In the early 1200s, King Philip II ordered the building of a massive castle known as Le Louvre (the castle is buried beneath the modern museum) and walls meant to protect the city from the belligerence of English rulers of Normandy<sup>2</sup> (little today survives of these walls). A royal palace occupied the western end of the Île de la Cité (now subsumed within the modern Palais de Justice), and royal authority was balanced at the eastern end of the island by Notre Dame Cathedral, built between 1163 and 1345. The school attached to the cathedral developed an increasing reputation for learning, attracting scholars from across Europe. By the thirteenth century, the students and masters of the cathedral school gradually established their independence, and the new university came to dominate the Left Bank of the Seine. The Sorbonne, the most famous college on the Left Bank, established in 1254, took the name of its founder, a royal chaplain, Robert de Sorbon.<sup>3</sup>

By the fourteenth century, the population of Paris had risen to two hundred thousand, making it the largest city in the Western world. Parisians could take pride in the Gothic splendor of the city's art and architecture, and the University of Paris was the most prestigious in Europe. Paris's medieval glory began to slip away in the mid-fourteenth century, as first the Black Death and then English armies arrived at the city gates.

How do we sum up the ethos of medieval Paris? One is tempted to trace the development of an ethos of romance to the celebrated twelfth-century love affair between the philosopher Peter Abelard and his student Héloïse, which ended when her uncle and kinsmen, as Abelard recounts, "had vengeance on me with a most cruel and most shameful punishment, such as astounded the whole world; for they cut off those parts of my body with which I had done that which was the cause of their sorrow."<sup>4</sup> But the city as a whole did not have a unifying ethos. Here's how Victor Hugo, the most influential member of the nineteenth-century French Romantic movement, described medieval Paris as it was supposed to look like "from a bird's view": "In the fifteenth century, Paris was still divided into three completely distinct and separate cities, each having its own

physiognomy, specialty, ethoses [mœurs], customs, privileges, and history: the Cité, the University, and the City [ville]. . . . The churches were in the Cité, the palace in the City, and the colleges in the University. . . . The Cité had Notre Dame, the City had the Louvre and City Hall [l'hôtel de ville], and the University had the Sorbonne."<sup>5</sup> What did unify the city, according to Hugo, was its architectural beauty: "Let us return to Paris in the fifteenth century. It wasn't only a beautiful city; it was a homogenous city, an architectural and historical product of the Middle Ages, a chronicle in stone."<sup>6</sup> Hugo goes on to describe the sights of medieval Paris in language that is too flowery—too romantic—to translate. Perhaps the key reason Paris seems so romantic is that the city is so beautiful?

From the ground up, however, medieval Paris would not have seemed so beautiful. In the twelfth century, the animal discharges of horses, dogs, and pigs in Rue St. Antoine (one of the few major medieval streets in Paris left today), mixed with rain water, transformed the mud streets into an unsanitary and malodorous mess. In the fourteenth century, the "Good Housekeeping Manual of Paris" (*Le Ménagier de Paris*) said the first duty of the attentive housewife is to wash the feet of her husband when he enters the home. The construction works at the height of Paris's Gothic splendor filled the air of Paris with a stench so powerful that royal marriages and treaty signings often took place in the "clean air" environment of Vincennes. Human waste and dirty water was emptied out of windows, preceded by the yell, "Gare l'eau" ("Beware of the water"), which sometimes came too late for the unlucky pedestrians. And medieval Parisians lived in fear of being attacked by rabid wild dog and wolf packs that patrolled the banks of the Seine, a river so polluted with carcasses from slaughterhouses that the fetid and blood-soaked water turned the stomachs of those who dared to venture onto its banks.<sup>7</sup>

By the mid-nineteenth century, Paris had scarcely improved its appearance and sanitation standards. The vicomte de Launay described the city in 1838: "How ugly Paris seems after a year's absence. How one chokes in these dark, narrow and dank corridors that we like to call the streets of Paris! One would think that one was in a subterranean city, that's how heavy is the atmosphere, how profound is the darkness!"<sup>8</sup> Due to poor hygiene, the mortality rate was higher in Paris than in the rest of France.<sup>9</sup> Paris in those days was far from a stroller's paradise: pedestrians were frequently hit by horse-drawn coaches on the narrow lanes and the driver was held responsible only if the pedestrian was hit by the front wheels.<sup>10</sup> If Beirut in the 1950s was supposed to be the Paris of the Middle East, the appearance of Paris of the 1850s may be closer to the Beirut of today: "an old city that had fallen into ruin through a natural process of decay, and partly a relatively new one that had suffered insurrection, occupation, vandalism

on an unprecedented scale, and prolonged neglect.”<sup>11</sup> Victor Hugo’s proposed solution was to beautify the city by restoration and respect for history, similar to Jane Jacob’s efforts in New York City more than a century later. He penned an article titled “War against Demolishers!” that called for a moratorium against the mutilation and destruction of monuments from the Middle Ages:

We have to stop the hammer which is mutilating the face of our country. One law suffices: let us do it. Whatever property rights happen to be, the destruction of a historic and monumental building should not be permitted to ignoble speculators whose honor is blinded by their interest; miserable people, and so idiotic that they don’t understand they are barbarians! There are two things about a building: its use and its beauty. Its use belongs to its owner, its beauty to the whole world, it’s yours, it’s mine, it’s everyone’s. Therefore, to destroy it is to surpass its right.<sup>12</sup>

Fortunately for posterity, Hugo’s powerful polemic shamed the city into saving and restoring the Notre Dame Cathedral. Overall, however, Hugo may have been on the wrong side of history. Most of medieval Paris was put to the wrecking ball by Baron Haussmann, and the outcome of the “barbarian” destruction is the Paris we know today, which many consider to be the world’s most beautiful city.

When Napoleon III seized absolute power through a military coup in 1851, Paris was on its way to dominating Europe in different spheres of social and political life. France acquired new territories in Africa and Asia and the capital city had the best cafés, theaters, and—with the Louvre—the best museum in the world. The French language was spoken by the educated elites of Europe, and Paris was also the capital of medicine and literature. The beautiful Spanish-born Empress Eugénie, the wife of Napoleon III, held balls to which every woman had to wear a new dress; the empress’s dressmaker dominated world fashion. But something had to be done about the city itself. In 1853, Napoleon III submitted a plan to his new prefect, Georges-Eugène Baron Haussmann, that was designed to improve the appearance, sanitation, and accessibility of the capital. Helped by an economic boom, the prefect put together his own ideas and exercised near-dictatorial powers in remaking Paris into what he called “the imperial Rome of our time.”<sup>13</sup>

Haussmann cleaned up the mud and manure by building a complete sewer system and a clean-water supply network. But Paris was a latecomer in health and sanitation compared to cities such as London, and these improvements would have come eventually. Haussmann’s most original contribution was to beautify the city. He laid out the Bois de Boulogne and made extensive improvements to smaller public parks (though he also destroyed many private gardens

and developed formerly green parts of the suburbs). His army of demolition men, stonemasons, and carpenters demolished 27,500 houses between 1853 and 1870 (including many historic hotels and churches), and 102,500 new ones were built, transforming an estimated 60 percent of Paris's buildings. Land that stood in the way of renovations was expropriated, but the total number of lodgings increased by 108,000 during this period, thus ensuring that Paris would not become a city of offices that empties out at night.<sup>14</sup> The filthy alleys around the Halles and the Île de la Cité were replaced with straight new boulevards that are still central today—for example, de Sébastopol, Saint-Germain, the Rue de Rennes, and the Avenue de l'Opéra. (Haussmann was subsequently honored with a boulevard named after him.) Sidewalks were built on the large boulevards, thus setting the stage for today's carefree stroller.<sup>15</sup>

*About twenty years ago, Daniel made a trip to Paris to see his old friend from Montreal, Mike Sayig. They decided to meet at the Arc de Triomphe at an appointed time. But Daniel was running late and when he arrived at the multilane road encircling the Arc, he noticed that there were no traffic lights for pedestrians. Daniel decided to make a dash for it, weaving in and out of oncoming traffic and literally leaping for his life to the other side. His friend later pointed out that there are underground pathways for pedestrians.*

Haussmann viewed himself as an artist:

I have the cult of Beauty, the Good, of big things,  
Of beautiful nature that inspires grand art,  
That sings to the ear or charms the look;  
I have the love of springtime in bloom: women and roses!<sup>16</sup>

If Haussmann's poetry leaves something to be desired, his talent as a demolition artist cannot fail to impress. Twelve grand avenues radiated from the Arc de Triomphe, projecting an ideal of symmetry that is pleasing to the eye. He replaced slums as well as elegant buildings that had larger top floors reserved for the nobility with buildings of six stories of uniform height, with flat walls and similarly proportioned windows. To avoid a monotonous uniformity, Haussmann allowed for an infinite variation of details regarding the decoration of windows, balconies, doors, and cornices. Buildings, roads, carrefours, and gardens had diverse elements but were all designed in relation to one another, and the heights of buildings varied in accordance with the width of the roads. Trees were planted on the large boulevards to break up their excessive width.<sup>17</sup> All in all, the urban design of the demolition artist approximates the aesthetic ideal known to the Chinese world as "harmony without uniformity."<sup>18</sup>



As one might expect, Haussmann's creative destruction was subject to severe criticism. The cost of Haussmann's expropriations and building projects proved astronomical, and he was eventually forced to resign from his post in 1870. (Until the beginning of the twentieth century, Paris remained the most indebted city in the world, and Parisians were paying off the debt until World War I.) Marxist critics such as Walter Benjamin argued that the streets were broadened to bring in troops in cases of riots and to prevent the erection of barricades across them (without long-term success, it should be noted: the barricades of the 1871 Paris Commune were erected at almost the same places as those of the insurrection of June 1848).<sup>19</sup> Benjamin also argued that the "increases in rent pushed the proletariat into the suburbs."<sup>20</sup> (We return to this theme in the final section of this chapter.) The poor were concentrated in the eastern part of Paris and in *arrondissements* (boroughs) bypassed by the city renovations, a rich-poor geographical divide that persists to this day. Many Parisians complained about feeling uprooted by the radical transformation of their city.<sup>21</sup> As the poet Baudelaire put it in 1857, "Old Paris is no longer; it changes (the city, alas, is changing much faster than the heart of man)."<sup>22</sup> Such complaints were further magnified by the erection of the Eiffel Tower in 1889. The writer Guy de Maupassant was so horrified by the tower that he regularly dined at its restaurant because it was the one spot in Paris where he didn't have to look at "this giant and disgraceful skeleton"; he eventually "left Paris, and then France because the Eiffel Tower finally just irritated me too much."<sup>23</sup>

But the Eiffel Tower, as we know, came to symbolize Paris, and such complaints now seem eccentric. In the same vein, Haussmann's long, straight, wide boulevards with their cafés and shops gave Paris its current form and established the foundation of what is today its most popular representation. Most Parisians today view the Haussmann legacy positively, to such an extent that suburban towns have named neighborhoods after Haussmann. Both locals and tourists take pleasure in strolling the wide boulevards and observing others from the vantage point of an outdoor café.<sup>24</sup> Now, it is the unharmonious urban renovations from the *années maudites*<sup>25</sup> (cursed years) of the 1960s and 1970s—the monstrous Tour Maine-Montparnasse (skyscrapers in the city center were banned shortly after it was built) and the high-tech Centre Pompidou—that are the objects of criticism. If Paris is viewed as beautiful, much of the credit should go to Haussmann.

*Like most of humanity, Daniel and his family looked forward to the second millennium. They chose to go to Paris, where they could celebrate the event in a romantic atmosphere. On the evening of December 31, 1999, Daniel, his wife, Bing, and their five-year-old son, Julien, crammed themselves onto the Pont-Neuf along with some of Daniel's relatives living in France. The evening was supposed to be magical,*

*but the crowd was so dense that they could not move. Julien became tired and Daniel had to carry him on his shoulders. Daniel became tired and he passed Julien to his cousin Yves, who carried Julien on his shoulders for the remainder of the evening. They were looking forward to the fireworks launched from the Eiffel Tower when the clock struck twelve, but their view was blocked by the National Assembly building. Daniel and his family eventually made it back to their hotel, where they watched the spectacular Eiffel Tower fireworks display on CNN. Daniel wished he had been there, until he remembered that he actually was there.*

But why should beauty be associated with romance? Yes, it's true that a city should be perceived as being beautiful for the association to stick—a branding campaign for, say, “romantic Cleveland” is not likely to be successful—but other cities such as Rome, San Francisco, and Krakow are beautiful, and yet they are not typically considered to be “romantic.” Perhaps it's the French language? But Italian is just as beautiful to the ear, and yet Rome—the ideal that inspired Haussmann's urban planning—is not widely associated with romance. Maybe it's the beautiful and fashionable Parisian women?<sup>26</sup> But women as much as men seem to fall prey to the stereotype of romantic Paris, so that can't be the explanation. The primary explanation, let us submit, is that American artists, from mid-nineteenth-century writers to today's Hollywood filmmakers, have imposed their romantic visions on the city. Few Parisians have been impressed—hence the resistance to the original formulation of our ethos of romance—but it has worked on most tourists.

*Daniel's father was friendly with the owner of Shakespeare and Company, the secondhand English-language bookstore facing Notre Dame Cathedral. The bookstore was famous for hosting exiled writers (expatriate writers, to use less romantic language), and Daniel's father sometimes stayed in the shop's spare bedroom (for free). Once, Daniel's father persuaded the owner to let Daniel stay there when he was a lowly graduate student with no published works to his name. The next day, browsing through some books in “his” room, Daniel was approached by a beautiful young French-language student from South Africa. She asked whether Daniel was a writer. He lied and said yes. She invited him for a drink at a nearby café. A man selling roses spotted the two and came to their table. The young South African offered to buy Daniel a rose, but she backed off when the seller quoted an outrageous price. Daniel said it's OK, we don't need such things (in retrospect, he should have bought her one instead). Daniel had to leave the café to rejoin his father for a party, and the next day she was gone.*

The American fascination with Paris owes much to the young Henry James, who wrote about the city in a series of letters published in the *New York Tribune*

in 1875–76.<sup>27</sup> Initially, he fell in love with the city and met several of his literary idols, such as Émile Zola and Guy de Maupassant. Although James eventually became disenchanted, dismissing the Impressionists and writers such as Gustave Flaubert, the initial impression stuck among his readers. In 1904, Oliver Wendell Holmes summed up the image of Paris in the American mind: “Good Americans, when they die, go to Paris.”<sup>28</sup> In the decades that followed, great American writers such as Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Henry Miller went there not to die but to work and strive for fame.<sup>29</sup> In *A Moveable Feast*, Hemingway wrote about the “Lost Generation” of American writers and artists who went to Paris in the 1920s. Hemingway’s account of the Bohemian life in Paris—sitting and drinking in cafés with great artists—influenced countless young Americans. In 1950, he penned one of the most oft-quoted lines about Paris: “If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast.”<sup>30</sup>

Cinematic representations of romance in Paris in American film further popularized the ethos. In the 1920s and 1930s, dozens of Hollywood films were set in Paris, and the city became synonymous (in American minds) with the glow of pleasure.<sup>31</sup> The romantic classic *Casablanca* (1942), with its flashbacks of an intense love affair between the two protagonists in Paris (actually shot with stock footage views of the city), sealed the ethos of romance in the American public’s mind. If it’s not possible to have a love affair with stars like Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman, perhaps a visit to Paris is the next best thing?

In 1950, *Life* magazine published a photo by Robert Doisneau of a couple kissing on a Paris street oblivious to passersby. The photo later became famous, adorning the dorm rooms of countless American college students. In 1993, Doisneau was sued by a couple claiming that he had taken their photograph without their knowledge and asking for a share of the photograph’s sales. Doisneau was forced to reveal that the photo was actually staged with professional actors, and he won the case.<sup>32</sup> But sales of the photo apparently continue as before.

*Avner and Daniel separate briefly so that they can buy gifts for family members. They decide to meet at the Café Flore, where Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre hosted famous philosophical discussions. The café is not the bohemian setting they expect. The customers seem to be either tourists or members of the haute bourgeoisie, and the menu is ridiculously expensive. The two friends decide to pack their bags and find another observation post.*

Mass tourism in Paris really took off after World War II. In 1994, twenty million tourists went to Paris; ten million visited Notre Dame Cathedral, six million toured the “bohemian” district of Montmartre, and five million went up in

the Eiffel Tower.<sup>33</sup> As the number of tourists increases, however, the relative importance of Paris on the global stage decreases. The days of Paris as the “capital of world civilization” (the slogan of the 1900 World’s Fair), engine of global finance,<sup>34</sup> and center of artistic and intellectual activity are long gone. The movers and shakers of the financial and political worlds now look more to Beijing and Hong Kong. Artists dream of making it in New York, not Paris. Nights in Paris have been depicted as the most boring in Europe, and party-seekers, DJs, and musicians have been fleeing Paris for Berlin.<sup>35</sup> The city, as Edmund White puts it, “has become a cultural backwater.”<sup>36</sup> Still, the dream of falling in love in Paris continues to enthrall, and will continue to do so until Hollywood producers decide it won’t sell any more movie tickets.

### A NONPASTEURIZED CITY

*The smell of nonpasteurized cheese (lait cru)—banned in many countries because of its health risk—cannot be resisted. Each time Avner and Daniel pass by a cheese shop, they have to enter. Ah, here’s one! They want to buy some cheese. Telling them that he will be back in a bit, the shopkeeper leaves them alone in the shop with all the treasures. He returns after ten minutes, and they are surprised: he trusted the two strangers not to take a pound of cheese and walk away. Of course he did. When you are surrounded by these pieces of cheese, you become truly human, you forget greed, you let yourself be carried by thoughts and smells and senses, like Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s uncorrupted soul who daydreams and finds comfort in the virtues of the natural world.*

There are two sorts of romanticism. We have already discussed the Hollywood version: going to Paris and falling in love. That’s the version rejected by the Parisians who talked with us.<sup>37</sup> But there’s another kind—what we call non-pasteurized romance—that may be closer to their ethos. In this version, romanticism is defined against the crass materialism of modern capitalist society. The target is the bourgeois who cares about money, social stability, personal health, and the artificial conventions of “civilized” life, with little concern for the well-being of others: even Parisians who may be “objectively” bourgeois in terms of class status often reject the label (critics call them “bobos,” bourgeois bohemians). Conversely, social recognition is given to rebels, marginalized poets, innovative artists, heroic individuals, all those who strive for something better, or less boring, than bourgeois stability.<sup>38</sup>

*In the seventeenth century, Parisian streets were named after their usages—hospitals, schools, hotels—and the same street could change names several times in ac-*



Julhès Fromagerie-Cave: 54 rue du faubourg Saint-Denis, 75010 Paris. Photograph © Emilie Frenkiel.

*cordance with the different uses.<sup>39</sup> Today, streets still change names, but they are named after architects, novelists, marshals, poets, philosophers, great teachers, an odd and anarchic mix of people (but few, if any, business leaders). On Rue Chénier, Avner and Daniel find a plaque that says: “Here lived in 1759 the poet André Chénier.” On Rue Chapel no. 9 in Montmartre, they read: “Here lived in 1970*

*Iannis Xenarkis, 1922–2001, Resistance fighter, political refugee, composer.” You cannot get more romantic and antibourgeois than that. The man stuck to his values regardless of consequences and chose to live in exile in order not to give up his freedom, eventually transforming his pain into music. He may be Greek, but Parisians honor his life.*

In Paris, the term *Romanticism* is most closely associated with an artistic and literary movement in the 1830s led by Victor Hugo, which challenged the order and restraint of classicism and called for more freedom of expression and experimentation with new literary forms such as novels that explore the lives of marginalized people.<sup>40</sup> But the term *romantique* was first applied to external nature—to landscapes, and to gardens of the more informal and less controlled kind known as *le jardin anglais* (the antithesis is the carefully sculpted and symmetrical garden landscape of Versailles). The best-known instance is in Rousseau’s fifth walk of the *Rêveries of the Solitary Walker*, written in the year before his death in 1778: “The banks of the Biemme Lake are more wild and romantic than those of Lake Geneva, because the rocks and forests are closer to the water.”<sup>41</sup> Rousseau’s idealization of the individual self freed from social conventions and his attacks on the oppression and inequalities of modern civilization were to become key themes of nineteenth-century Romanticism. The urban equivalent of the solitary walker is the *flâneur*, the stroller who becomes, in Charles Baudelaire’s phrase, “a botanist of the sidewalk.” In the posthumously published *Le Spleen de Paris* (1869), written in the revolutionary genre of prose poetry, Baudelaire is fascinated by the human detritus left behind in the rush to modernize Paris. In “The Eyes of the Poor,” he tells the story of an impoverished family dressed in rags, looking into a new café: the eyes of a little boy say “How beautiful! How beautiful! But it’s a house where only people who are not like us can enter.” Baudelaire articulates his thoughts: “Not only was I moved by that family of eyes, but I also felt a bit ashamed by our glasses and carafes, larger than our thirst.” The point is not to criticize excess of emotion: Baudelaire celebrates drunkenness “of wine, poetry, or virtue.”<sup>42</sup> The problem is that some people are too materially deprived to partake of nonpasteurized romance.

*Avner and Daniel walk by the Cornelius Restaurant on Rue de Trévis, close to their hotel. They look inside: simple, brownish chairs and tables. It’s noisy and colorful, full of happy and talkative people. They enter and are warmly welcomed. The waiter asks the two strollers to take a seat. Would you like to sit here or inside? He points to a table by the window. Avner and Daniel are hungry, so either place is fine with them. The waiter recommends a few dishes even before they have a chance to see the menu. Indeed, the food is superb. Simple, using the freshest ingredients, and*

*playing on the tongue with a variety of tastes: harmony without uniformity. Wonderful food, atmosphere, full of patrons day and night, but the restaurant will close down and move to another place. Why? they ask the waiter (by now they know he is the owner, one of three). He introduces Avner and Daniel to the chef, another owner; he sighs and says, well, this place has been here for a couple of years; we need to do something fresh. Avner and Daniel insist: but it is doing so well, why do you want to move? Ah, he says, precisely, that's why! We need a new challenge! The two friends return the next day for lunch and pursue the conversation. This time, the waiter-owner confides that there's another reason they are closing shop: they are worried about the bad economic times ahead and are opening a smaller restaurant in a more affluent district where it's easier for them to pursue their craft without worrying about money. Avner and Daniel are somewhat disappointed by this response, but they reason it's still different from what they'd find in New York or Hong Kong, where owners would stick with a restaurant until it actually started declining.*

In Paris, it's distasteful to talk about bourgeois themes like money or social status. The key to the good life is to express one's creative talents—it's not just artists who are artists. And if creative expression won't come naturally, the government will step in to help. Whatever the differences between the political left and right, both sides share the principle of state intervention to support culture. In 1959, the conservative president Charles de Gaulle gave the distinguished writer André Malraux a mandate to create a ministry of culture. Malraux proclaimed France's mission "to propose to humanity the means and the method of an intellectual and spiritual action." In 1981, the socialist president François Mitterrand appointed a prodigal minister of culture, Jack Lang, who embarked on a vast program of subsidies to avant-garde artists in France. Today, France spends 1.5 percent of its GDP to support a wide array of cultural and recreational activities (versus only 0.7 percent for Germany, 0.5 percent for the United Kingdom, and 0.3 percent for the United States). The culture ministry, with its 11,200 employees, lavishes money on museums, opera houses, and theater festivals. The ministry also appointed a *chargé de mission* for fashion, song, and varieties (dubbed the "minister for rock 'n' roll") in the 1980s to help France compete against the Anglo-Saxons. Cultural subsidies are ubiquitous. Proceeds from an 11 percent tax on cinema tickets are plowed back into subsidies for national film production, and the government taxes every home with a TV set in order to support high-quality public programs (since June 2009, there are no longer commercials on public channels from 8:00 PM to 6:00 AM). The government provides tax breaks for freelance workers in the performing arts. Painters and sculptors can get subsidized studio space. Best of all, government employees get subsidized lunch vouchers to support the restaurant industry. And the gov-

ernment forces companies of more than fifty employees to pay 2 percent of total wages to the in-house *comité d'entreprise* (workers' council), which uses the money either to build a company cafeteria or to distribute *tickets-restaurant* (restaurant vouchers) to employees. Sixty-three thousand French restaurants accept these lunch vouchers (there is a sticker in their window saying they do).<sup>43</sup> Do such policies limit consumer choice? Of course they do! But the point is to support a nonpasteurized way of life, not the bourgeois freedom to spend one's income as one sees fit.

*6:30 AM. Daniel is still sleeping. Avner wonders: perhaps he's not a morning person? Avner goes outside in search of the nearest café. The air is crispy cold, but the sun is out; it will soon warm up. He finds a warm and cozy café with a huge window looking out on Rue Chadet. The TV is on but nobody is watching it. Five men stand by the bar and chat with the owner. Avner orders an espresso and is about to pay for it, but the owner won't take the money. Avner is puzzled, so he observes the other customers. He notices that they say "Bonjour" when they enter and pay only when they leave. He understands: having a morning coffee at a café is not only about drinking the strong black liquid. It is also about exchanging a few words, relaxing, strengthening community ties at the local café, maybe a word of gossip or an argument about politics. Avner recalls Starbucks in Manhattan. The moment he enters, an employee announces with his loud voice, "Good Morning!" and then, "What can I do for you?" In Manhattan, coffee is about good service. The customer is always right. In Paris, it is about community and tradition; the customer might be wrong, say by paying when he orders, and he will be corrected so that he understands the rule of the game and becomes part of the community next time he enters the café. Later in the day, Avner and Daniel stop by another café. Avner orders a cheese plate with an espresso, but the waiter is paternalistic: he says coffee should come after the cheese, not together. Avner understands. What might seem rude to the American tourist is an effort to nourish a nonpasteurized way of life.*

Part of the struggle against globalization, with its tendency to reduce things to the lowest economic denominator, is the effort to maintain traditional values and practices. In France, it's often about the symbolic value of traditional food, as in the famous case of the French farmers led by José Bové who destroyed the McDonald's in Millau in July 1999. Several weeks before the incident, the World Trade Organization had allowed the U.S. government to impose a surtax on European "luxury products" in response to Europe's refusal to import American beef. One of the items the American government taxed was (nonpasteurized) Roquefort cheese, a cheese that can be produced only in the caves of the town of Roquefort-sur-Soulzon because it is aged using a particular strain of bacterium



that reproduces there. The cheese must also meet quality assurance conditions such as being made from the milk of sheep raised within a radius of about one hundred miles of the town. The World Trade Organization decision infuriated the farmers around Millau whose sheep supply the milk for Roquefort, and they attacked the McDonald's in response.<sup>44</sup>

In many cities, such protests by a small group of rural farmers would be dismissed as the last gasp of disgruntled reactionaries. In Paris, however, they were treated as national heroes, and José Bové was crowned as the leader of the anti-globalization movement. If it's about protecting France's great gastronomical traditions, Parisians will rally to the cause, whatever the economic cost. Part of the explanation is an attachment to land, to the (imagined or real) ways of life in rural France. It's hard to think of another large city where the residents have such a soft spot for rural traditions (more typical might be the Shanghainese contempt for "backward" peasants). Parisians literally import their culinary traditions to the city. Parisians buy more food per capita at farmers' markets and specialist food retailers than residents in the rest of France do.<sup>45</sup> Bakeries, cheese shops, and butchers are everywhere in Paris, far more common than chain supermarkets (the opposite may be true in rural France). And Paris-based politicians are supposed to show their knowledge of rural traditions in ways that would seem strange in other big cities. It is worth quoting a humorous passage by two Canadian observers of French culture:

[The] *Salon de l'agriculture* (agricultural exhibition) [is] held every March in Paris. At first, we were surprised that France's agricultural show was even held in Paris, not somewhere "in the provinces." But of course Paris is located in the middle of France's richest farmlands, which were themselves the source of Paris's early might. With the Salon, Paris once again flexes its muscles for the rest of the country to see. Each year, the president, the prime minister, and half the cabinet members do the rounds at the *Salon de l'agriculture*, shake hands with the farmers, squat down and milk a few cows, and pet prize piglets. Their moves are carefully documented by the press. However, it's more of a test than a choreographed photo op. All French politicians are expected to know about farm animals and produce. [Former] President Jacques Chirac gets rave reviews each year for deftly handling lambs and enthusiastically slapping cows' rears. But reputations can be tainted by poor reputation at the Salon. Former Prime Minister Edouard Balladur made a fool of himself with his poor handling techniques when a lamb relieved itself on his suit jacket, and the incident has remained on his record.<sup>46</sup>

Perhaps it's too late to resist the onslaught of genetically modified foods, fast food, and the Americanization of mass culture. But we can count on Parisians to put up a good fight.

*Avner and Daniel meet Anne Cheng, the eminent scholar of classical Chinese political thought. Anne was born and bred in Paris and kindly agrees to talk about her city. She invites the two for a lovely lunch at a café near the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. Daniel has learned that Anne was recently appointed professor at the prestigious Collège de France, but she seems almost embarrassed to mention it. We talk about the art of conversation in Paris. Anne explains that conversation is like a game: you enjoy it, you show your eloquence, you take risks, and you try to please without taking the whole thing too seriously. The aim is not to demonstrate or persuade but rather to experience the pleasure of conversation for its own sake. We speak in English. Anne is perfectly fluent, with an Oxbridge accent (she spent several years at Cambridge), and makes her points clearly and with a measure of modesty and caution—more typical of English academics<sup>47</sup> and quite unlike the way she says Parisians debate. And yet, when we ask her what she misses most when she is away from Paris, she says it's the intellectual life, the conversations, the amusement.*

The way Parisians debate is rooted in the traditions of aristocratic salons of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The French nobility of the ancien régime developed an art of sociability in which new forms of conversation were central. Left powerless and idle by their increasing isolation from politics and administration, they turned their energies instead to the development of a refined code of manners and an ideal of gallant, spirited exchange that became a model for social and intellectual life. As Benedetta Craveri explains, “only members of the nobility of the *ancien régime*—slaves to a magnificent idleness and with no concern other than to celebrate themselves—could make of social life and art an end in itself. . . . This happy utopia was a blessed island, an innocent Arcadia in which the trials of everyday life might be forgotten and illusory moral and aesthetic perfection cultivated.”<sup>48</sup> Versailles was the political and administrative center, but Paris gained the social and intellectual upper hand in the eighteenth century. “At Versailles you intrigue, in Paris you amuse yourself,” as Montesquieu put it.<sup>49</sup> The salons were hosted by charismatic and (often) beautiful women and the main aim was the maximization of pleasure via refined conversation. The hostesses were supposed to set the rules of the game, described by one hostess as the need to allow “a joyous spirit to preside, which . . . would nevertheless inspire in the hearts of the whole Company a disposition to be amused by everything and bored by nothing; and I want great and small things to be

spoken of, as long as they are spoken of elegantly; and that one only speaks of that which must be spoken about, without there being the slightest constraint.”<sup>50</sup> Some hostesses also became celebrated for their wit and intelligence. Here’s a description of Madame du Deffand by one of her male admirers, the marquis du Châtel: “If there was a question of improvising and executing some plays, it would be to you whom we should turn to. I have often experienced that pleasure by your fireside; there you are admirable. What variety, what contrasting sentiments in both character and way of thinking! What ingenuity, what power and accuracy! Even when you are rambling. There is nothing missing, but everything to send one mad with pleasure, impatience, and admiration. You are invaluable to a philosopher spectator.”<sup>51</sup>

As we know, the “innocent Arcadia” was abolished as the 1789 Revolution set out on its path of blood and terror. But the nobility still salvaged its style, and perhaps its honor, in the worst circumstances: “In prison men and women would dress with care, pay each other visits, hold a salon; it would be at the end of a corridor, between four candles; but there they would joke, compose madrigals, sing songs, take pride in being as gallant, as gay, as gracious as before; should you be morose and uncouth because an accident has placed you in a bad inn? Before the judges and on the tumbrel, they would retain their dignity and their smiles; women particularly went to the scaffold with the ease and serenity with which they attended a *soirée*.”<sup>52</sup>

What wasn’t killed, however, was the art of conversation.<sup>53</sup> After the revolution, it became democratized and no longer the privilege only of an aristocratic elite. In the nineteenth century, Madame de Staël (who had been exposed to the art of conversation as a young girl) hosted salons, and her account of conversation could be taken straight from the salons of the *ancien régime*:

The feeling of satisfaction that characterizes an animated conversation does not so much consist of its subject matter. Neither the ideas nor the knowledge that may emerge from it are of primary interest. Rather, it is a certain manner in which people have an effect on others; of reciprocally and rapidly giving one another pleasure; of speaking just as quickly as one thinks; of spontaneously enjoying oneself; of being applauded without working; of displaying one’s wit through all the nuances of accent, gesture, and look, in order to produce at will a sort of electricity that causes sparks to fly, and that relieves some people of the burden of their excess vivacity and awakens others from a state of painful apathy.<sup>54</sup>

Paris was still the center for such conversation. Writing in 1814, here’s how Madame de Staël described the city:

It seems to me that Paris is recognized as the one city in the world where wit and a taste for conversation are most widespread; and what is known as the *mal du pays*, that indefinable mourning for one's country which has nothing to do even with those friends who are left behind, is particularly applicable to the pleasure of discourse. . . . [T]he spoken word is not only, as it is elsewhere, a means of communicating ideas, sentiments, and concerns, but it is an instrument that it is enjoyable to play and that, like music with some peoples and strong liquor with others, raises the spirits.<sup>55</sup>

Unfortunately, Madame de Staël was sent into exile by Napoleon for ten years and, in her state of *mal du pays*, she wrote that Paris “was the place in the world where one could best do without happiness.”<sup>56</sup> If Madame de Staël were around today, she would probably appreciate Paris even more. Everyone today is educated to value and practice eloquence, and it shows up at every level of society:

Even the beggars in the Paris subway do their best to be eloquent. . . . When they enter the subway car, they excuse themselves for disturbing other passengers. They then carefully explain how they arrived in their present conditions, laying the basis for the request that follows. We even heard beggars deliver these speeches in rhyming couplets. It can take two, three, or even four metro stops to get through them, and much of their original audience is gone by the time they wrap up, but they rarely cut corners. They always sum up their request the same way, by explaining they need money to “eat, drink, and stay clean.” Then they thank the passengers for listening to them and wish them a good day as they collect any handouts before exiting the car. North Americans couldn't expect that kind of eloquence from a politician.<sup>57</sup>

*Beijing, early 2009. Daniel and his wife, Bing, are watching a CNN news program hosted by Fareed Zakaria. One of the guests is Fawaz Gerges, an old friend from their Oxford days who went on to become a highly influential expert on Middle East politics. Another guest is Bernard-Henri Levy, perhaps the most renowned French public intellectual today. Fawaz, a professor at the London School of Economics, distinguishes between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda and argues for the need to refine policies that address different sorts of threats. BHL (as he is known in France), with an open-necked shirt and flowing hair, makes grand statements in heavily accented English about Islam and existential threats to Western civilization, and he is supported by another guest, the writer Christopher Hitchens, who strongly supported the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Fawaz is visibly upset by the conversation; he turns to BHL, holds his arm, and tries to knock some sense into him,*

*but they run out of time. Bing and Daniel feel sorry for their friend, but they are very amused.*

Paris-style political conversation is not about finding agreement or searching for the truth; it's about asserting your truth. You state a principle in a heroic manner and only then do you search for reasons or consider the implications (the term *a priori* is commonly used in everyday Parisian conversation). Ideas become ideals, and the task is to adjust reality to those ideals rather than the other way around.

*Daniel meets some of his French cousins for lunch in Paris. He tells a joke about two French intellectuals objecting to a plan for political reform on the grounds that it works in practice but not in theory. Nobody laughs. Avner and Daniel meet up and pursue their "research." They sit in a café on Rue des Petits Carreaux. There is a Parti Socialiste office opposite the café with a huge poster of Barack Obama, depicted in red and green. The two friends find it odd that Obama is considered a socialist. They move to another café in Denfert Rochereau and meet Daniel's stepmother, Odile, and stepbrother, Ugo. Odile and Daniel kiss each other several times on the cheeks (Daniel can't figure out when to stop). Odile, born and bred in Paris, says she likes the sense of community in her neighborhood, the way shopkeepers often give food to the homeless people. Ugo, who has worked in the Middle East, begins to talk about politics. Odile leaves, and Daniel is sad to say goodbye.<sup>58</sup> Ugo switches to English; he is fluent and highly articulate. He has also learned Arabic without any formal training. Ugo casts doubt on the official story behind the terrorist attacks on September 11th, claiming that the way the Twin Towers came down suggests it was caused by controlled detonations. And it looked like a missile rather than a plane crashed into the Pentagon. Plus, how could people have made phone calls from a plane just before it crashed into the ground? Then he talks about his experience with war in Lebanon. Of course it was tragic, but he also experienced a kind of "effervescence." Avner and Daniel ask about Ugo's future plans, and he says he is learning Farsi and thinking of joining the French forces in Afghanistan. Daniel worries about his stepbrother's future, and they kiss goodbye. Avner and Daniel continue their work. They walk to Le Select, a café in Montparnasse, to meet Simson Najovits, an old friend of Daniel's father who moved to Paris in the early 1950s. Simson is late, and the two friends pursue their "research." Daniel notices a writer, with pen and paper, who was in this same spot twenty years ago. They exchange greetings. Avner observes that writers in Paris cafés often seem to be using pen and paper; perhaps it's bad form to use personal computers? He roams the café, reflecting on the list of people who used to come here. Picasso, the one and only. A communist who devoted himself to art. Max Jacob: painter, writer, poet. He was Catholic, but had*

*been born Jewish. Hence he was taken away from his beloved Paris and sent by the Nazis to a concentration camp, where he was murdered in 1944. André Derain, founder of Fauvism, who was supposed to become an engineer. His friend Henri Matisse managed to persuade his parents that he could devote himself to art. Fight for your love; do not betray it with money and comfort. Who else was here? Ernest Hemingway, who volunteered to be an ambulance driver in World War I, was seriously wounded and subsequently moved to Paris, where he wrote about the ways of heroes and antiheroes.*

Paris is one of the centers of the movement for Tibetan independence. Many Tibetan exiles live there, and the Dalai Lama is often taken to represent the romantic ideal of the simple, wise soul, uncorrupted by capitalist civilization, who lives in harmony with nature. As one might expect, Parisian support for the Dalai Lama causes tensions with the Chinese government, and the French government occasionally tries to mend fences with China. Here's a transcript of the public debate that took place in the French Senate on February 5, 2009:

*M. Jean-Pierre Raffarin:* It is paradoxical that the country that was the first to have the foresight to understand the extent of China's global rise is today in a difficult diplomatic situation with it. The role of China on the global scene is evident today: it was comforted by the presence of its representatives at the last G20 summit in Washington, following the initiative of the president of the Republic. We need to take seriously the recent decisions of China that led to the report on the Europe-China summit under the French presidency and to the recent tour of France . . . by the Chinese prime minister, Wen Jiabao. We've made a decision to have a global strategic partnership with China and we support the opening of China to the world. In a period of crisis, the "closing" of a people in on itself is worrying. All our heads of state, from Charles de Gaulle to Jacques Chirac, and those in between, Georges Pompidou, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, and François Mitterrand, along with President Sarkozy, all showed they were attached to Franco-Chinese friendship. France does not want to reevaluate the question of national sovereignty in China, just as it does not want others to question its own national sovereignty.

*M. René-Pierre Signé:* Hooray for Tibet! [*Vive le Tibet!*]<sup>59</sup>

Franco-China ties were further strained in June 2009, when the Dalai Lama arrived in Paris to be named an honorary citizen of the city. The Dalai Lama himself does not support independence. He calls for more autonomy in Tibetan

regions under Chinese sovereignty, with China having control of defense and foreign policy, but such distinctions are often lost on his supporters in Paris, many of whom are former Maoists turned fierce anti-Communists.

*Simson arrives. The former editor in chief of Radio France International, he now writes books about ancient Egypt in his “retirement.” Daniel recalls meeting him in that same café with his father in the mid-1980s, and they would argue about whether the United States should support the Contras to overthrow the Sandinista rulers in Nicaragua (Simson supported the anti-Communist contras, Daniel the Sandinistas). They greet each other, and Daniel cannot refrain from pointing out that Daniel Ortega (the leader of the Sandinistas) is back in power in Nicaragua. Simson argues that Ortega has gone capitalist. They move on to other topics. Simson, a militant atheist, asserts that most Jews in Jerusalem are secular. Avner, a Jerusalemite who has been teaching political theory at the Hebrew University for nearly twenty years, disagrees,<sup>60</sup> but fails to persuade Simson. They ask if Simson regrets leaving Canada, but he says no, there’s no difference between Canada and the United States. Daniel protests, to no avail. Simson also asserts that the Chinese Communist Party will soon collapse. Unfortunately, Simson gets up to leave just as Daniel is about to remark that Simson made the same assertion twenty years ago.*

In political practice, the tendency to think in terms of moral absolutes takes the form of uncompromising political protests. The earliest protests were carried out by militants at the University of Paris in the Middle Ages: in 1200, students went on strike after the royal representatives used harsh measures after a tavern brawl, and scholars launched a two-year strike, from 1225 to 1227, following the repression of a carnival.<sup>61</sup> The most violent insurrection, of course, was the French Revolution. Whatever the bloody excesses of the revolution, André Malraux expressed an influential verdict: “The Revolution! All that is not it is worse than it.”<sup>62</sup> The 1871 Paris Commune was put down by violent repression—seventeen thousand people were executed and up to thirty-five thousand died<sup>63</sup>—thus diminishing the enthusiasm for violent protests. In May 1968, a half million students and workers inspired by slogans such as “L’imagination au pouvoir” (“Empower Imagination!”; it sounds better in French) marched in the streets of Paris, but the revolutionary energy slowly petered out.<sup>64</sup> More recently, the protests have often taken the form of street theater, with union leaders actually complaining if the riot squads fail to show up (because it looks as though the government isn’t taking them seriously, which is bad for internal union politics).<sup>65</sup> Since protesters tend to avoid such vulgar concerns as money, they usually pitch their demands at the level of high principle, which helps to explain why “Parisians are invariably sympathetic towards their protesting or striking compatri-

ots.” In actual fact, the French do not strike as much as the Germans, British, or Americans do, but since Paris is the political, economic, and intellectual center of France—unlike the capital cities of more decentralized or federal states—this guarantees more visibility, and therefore the city is the “obvious choice for almost any protest over any issue.”<sup>66</sup>

To be frank, it’s hard to make sense of the ethos of nonpasteurized romance. The ethos seems to be both politicized (*engagé*) and disengaged from real politics, for and against tradition, ironic and naïve, relativist and absolutist, elitist and populist, violent and peace-loving.<sup>67</sup> But it’s not supposed to make sense, especially not economic cents. So long as it’s not bourgeois, it’s fine. *Pace* Karl Marx, the deepest problem with the bourgeoisie is that it’s so boring. That’s the real target, and the demand for consistency is beside the point. Better to be wrong than boring! But what if romance is not consistent with morality?

#### ROMANCE VERSUS MORALITY

*Avner and Daniel head to Les Halles in central Paris, site of the city’s central provision market since the twelfth century. It was the hub from which produce made its way to outdoor markets that sold fresh food to individual shoppers, as well as a wholesale market that supplied the kitchens of the thousands of restaurants that have been among the distinctive landmarks of Paris since the early nineteenth century.<sup>68</sup> What a wonderful symbol for a nonpasteurized city: the “stomach of Paris” in the middle of town! Unfortunately, the wholesale marketplace was demolished in 1971 and replaced with an underground shopping center, the Forum des Halles. Avner and Daniel take an escalator down to the shopping center, and they are dismayed by what they see: the two friends feel as though they had wandered onto a film set from Blade Runner: it looks like a high-tech future gone bad. They are glad to leave the strolling drug dealers and depressed mental patients for the light outside.*

But maybe we should be careful about romanticizing Les Halles as it used to be: in 1182–83, King Philip II cleared land at the expense of Paris’s Jewish community in order to organize the construction of the “stomach of Paris.”<sup>69</sup> In fact, one of the recurring themes in Parisian history is discrimination against the Jewish community, stemming from prejudices such as blaming the Jewish people for the death of Jesus.<sup>70</sup> As a result, Jews were forced into professions that were regarded as socially inferior or were forbidden to Christians—moneylending, rent-collecting, and accounting—and they became stereotyped as avaricious financial speculators. Similar phenomena took place in the rest of Europe, but even otherwise progressive Parisian voices expressed anti-Semitic sentiments in



the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, if only because the passion for money seemed so at odds with the ethos of nonpasteurized romanticism. For example, one of the characters in Guy de Maupassant's novel *Bel-Ami* (1885) voices the following words: "The boss? A real Jew! And you know, the Jews, we can never change them. What a race!—And he cited shocking traits of avarice, of the avarice which is particular to the sons of Israel, of savings of 10 centimes, bargainings over stoves [*marchandages de cuisinières*], shameful discounts asked for and obtained, all kinds of ways of being usurers, pawnbrokers."<sup>71</sup> Authors such as Honoré de Balzac portrayed stereotyped Jewish bankers with similar traits. Of course, there were also heroic stances to protect the human rights of Jews, most famously, "J'accuse!" (Émile Zola's 1898 defense of the Jewish captain Alfred Dreyfus, who was falsely accused of spying for the Germans). But it could be that widely shared antipathy to "Jewish" capitalism made it more difficult for Parisian intellectuals to really confront the evils of anti-Semitism.<sup>72</sup>

The clash between the nonpasteurized ethos and morality came to a head in World War II. The Nazis occupied Paris but they also tried to maintain a vibrant cultural and intellectual life. At the end of the war, Hitler gave orders to blow up the bridges and key monuments of Paris, as he did in Warsaw, but the order was disobeyed by the German general von Choltitz, who thus saved Paris.<sup>73</sup> Of course, the same Nazi occupiers had no qualms about killing Jews: in July 1942, fifteen thousand Jews were trapped in the Paris vélodrome without water, food, or lavatories, before being sent to death camps.<sup>74</sup> It's as though—no, it really is the case—that the Nazis valued aesthetic beauty over human life.

*Summer 1990. Bing and Daniel spend a month in Paris, Bing to study French, Daniel to finish his doctoral thesis. They visit the Musée Guimet, one of the world's leading museums of Asian art, established in the late nineteenth century, at the height of France's imperial glory. The newly married couple is in love, and the beautiful objects around them seem to magnify their love. Bing mentions that she hasn't seen so many Chinese treasures in China itself.*

In March 2009, Pierre Bergé, the personal and business partner of Yves Saint Laurent, put on sale two eighteenth-century bronze heads that had been looted by French and British forces from the imperial gardens of the Summer Palace outside Beijing in 1860. The site is still rubble, and it is a bitter reminder of China's humiliation at the hands of Western powers.

The Chinese government had requested the return of the bronze heads and a group of Chinese lawyers tried to block the auction, but a French court allowed the sale to proceed. Pierre Bergé had the chutzpah to claim that the Chinese government could have the looted goods if it would "observe human rights, give

liberty to the Tibetan people, and welcome the Dalai Lama.” One can imagine the reaction to a collector who says he will return goods looted by the Nazis only if Israel pulls out of the occupied territories!

As it happens, the sale went ahead and the heads were bought by the Chinese collector and auctioneer Cai Mingchao. With equal chutzpah—or perhaps we should say “nonpasteurized romance”—Mr. Cai said that he wouldn’t pay for the goods on moral grounds. As of this writing, the case is still in the courts.

In 1861, Victor Hugo wrote, “I hope that a day will come when France, delivered and cleansed, will return this booty to despoiled China.” Maybe we can agree, but Paris will be much less beautiful—and perhaps less romantic—if Hugo’s wish comes true.

*In 1986, Daniel visits his aunt Marie and uncle Maurice in Pontgouin, a small village (population 985) in northwestern France. Marie left Quebec to marry Maurice in the early 1950s, and they started a small company in the village making flowers encased in glass to adorn tombstones (a fashion at the time). Two of their children and their grandchildren live nearby (the third child—the lovely and flirtatious Annick—died tragically of cancer at a young age). Marie and Maurice live in a four-hundred-year-old house with one-meter-thick walls. Maurice takes Daniel to a large supermarket, where he feels about twenty camembert cheeses before finally settling on one with the right texture. He does the same with baguettes, and teaches Daniel how to distinguish among different sorts of wines. They return home, and Marie cooks dinner while Daniel and Maurice sample different wines and cheeses. Marie brings out half-cooked dishes from the kitchen so that Maurice can taste them and suggest improvements. Daniel and Maurice begin to talk about politics. Maurice openly calls himself a bourgeois, he criticizes the socialists for imposing onerous conditions on the owners of small businesses, and he expresses his admiration for Charles de Gaulle. Marie serves her wonderful food, another bottle of wine is opened. Daniel is enjoying himself—perhaps the bourgeoisie is not so bad after all. Who needs to go to restaurants and the theater when you have this sort of life? And what if the romantics (pasteurized or not) are somehow parasitic on the stable lives of the bourgeoisie? Imagine if everyone led lives like Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, writing and criticizing without getting married and having children? Who’s going to produce things and reproduce people for the future? Over the next two decades, Daniel was to spend more time in Pontgouin than in Paris. There was nothing he enjoyed more than an extended meal in Marie and Maurice’s garden, basking in the human warmth of a dozen or so relatives. In the summer of 2008, Daniel was devastated to hear that Maurice had been killed in a car accident near his hometown in Brittany: he was hit by another car while on an expedition to buy fresh scampi.*

If Parisians feel superiority over the provincial bourgeoisie in the rest of France, the latter regard Parisians as morally decadent.<sup>75</sup> It's hard to imagine too many people outside Paris sympathizing with the sorts of sentiments expressed by Guy de Maupassant in "Ode to Adultery":

What I'm about to say will no doubt seem deplorably subversive. Too bad; one must seek only the truth, without worrying about taught morality, orthodox and official; of morality, the supposed natural law, infinitely variable, optional, the thing that differs for each country, appreciated in a new way by each expert, priest or legislator, and which is always modified by everybody.

The only law that matters is the supreme law of humanity, the law that governs human kisses, and that serves as the eternal theme for poets.

We live in a society that is disgustingly bourgeois, timorous, and mediocre. Never before has the spirit been so limited and less human. . . .

I do not want to absolve adultery. I just want to show the absolutely unjust situation that is created by marriage. . . .

Let us first consider [the fact] affirmed by most doctors and philosophers, that we are polygamous and not monogamous. . . . All it takes is a bit of reasoning to prove it. A woman can have only one child per year, while a man . . . can reproduce more easily. The law of nature therefore wants the male to have many wives. Whence it follows that the harem is a wise institution. . . .

I would like somebody to show me one man—only one man—with a normal body and soul, who stayed absolutely monogamous his whole life.<sup>76</sup>

Today, the sorts of advertising campaigns that may sell products in Paris—such as the ad for the national train service showing two pairs of feet popping out from under a duvet, with text that reads, "Tell your spouse you're on a business trip"<sup>77</sup>—won't be effective in Pontgouin.

In an otherwise insightful book analyzing the "national character" of the French, titled *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong*, Jean-Benoît Nadeau and Julie Barlow fail to clearly distinguish between the Parisian ethos and that of the rest of France. Yes, the country is highly centralized,<sup>78</sup> all roads (almost literally) lead to Paris, and what happens in Paris has great influence on the rest of France. But Parisians are still viewed as somewhat strange by people outside the city. As an empirical matter, Parisians go out more often to restaurants, attend church less,<sup>79</sup> vote more to the left,<sup>80</sup> and, of course, protest more against bourgeois values. In some ways, such as state-sponsored restaurant and theater

coupons, the rest of France may be subsidizing the Parisian lifestyle. And perhaps the ethos of nonpasteurized romance could exist only on the foundation of more stable family—bourgeois—values.

*Another conversation with Daniel's stepbrother. Ugo (a handsome young man, it must be said) prowls the streets of Denfert-Rochereau wrapped in a cardboard advertisement for a beauty product. He must earn money to support his wife and adopted daughter in Thailand (he lived there for two years and speaks fluent Thai). He now lives with his mother in a tiny apartment and complains that Paris is so expensive. Don't believe the hype, he says. Go to the suburbs; that's more real than what you see here. Daniel responds that he did in fact visit the suburbs once. In 1987, he went to Paris with the Oxford University ice hockey team and stayed with a family in the bleak suburb of Cergy-Pontoise. This doesn't look like Paris, he thought to himself. Daniel remembers entering their home with a sinking feeling: no book shelves and a few tacky pictures. He perked up when his host opened a bottle of champagne. The host talked about working on the assembly line of a major French car manufacturer, with story after story of abuses inflicted on his working-class compatriots. By the end of the bottle, Daniel Ortega—as he was then known by his hockey mates—was ready to mount the barricades.*

Let us return to Haussmann's legacy. On the plus side, he built beautiful buildings in the center of town that would be occupied by middle- and upper-class Parisians, thus ensuring that the downtown core would not empty out after office hours as some American cities do today. But high rents in central Paris pushed the poor into the suburbs, and the rich-poor geographical divide is still the key challenge facing Paris today. The ring highway—the Périphérique, completed in 1973—“is if anything even better at separating the city from the hinterlands than its predecessors [city walls] were, and today that means keeping the immigrant masses at bay in their featureless housing project clusters.”<sup>81</sup> In fact, only 2.1 million people live in the famous inner city; the other 7.1 million residents live in the suburbs.<sup>82</sup> Not all suburbs are poor (and not all of central Paris is wealthy), but the more notorious suburbs are viewed as a no-man's-land by residents of the inner city, and few dare to venture into them. The division is both real and psychological: asked to produce hand-drawn maps, 82 percent of inner-city Parisians “drew on the administrative boundary of the city—a feature that would almost certainly be totally absent from maps drawn by Londoners or Romans, and a reflection of the separation of the city from its suburbs.”<sup>83</sup>

The suburbs came to the attention of the rest of the world in 2005, when the worst unrest since the student riots of May 1968 hit the northern periphery of Paris. The deaths of two Muslim boys—electrocuted while evading a police

identity check—and a teargas bomb explosion inside a mosque galvanized the Muslim community, causing widespread vandalism and rioting in towns around Paris. The underlying problem was not just poverty, but also discrimination against French citizens of Arab and African descent, most of whom were residents of dehumanizing public housing developments on the urban periphery. Nicolas Sarkozy, then the minister of the interior and later the president of France, exacerbated the situation when he referred to the rioters as “scum” and suggested that the solution was to expel the “foreign agitators” responsible for it. In reality, most of those arrested, though ethnically African, were native-born French citizens. In late November 2007, rioters in some of those same suburban communities repeated their protests.<sup>84</sup>

The French government has embarked on programs designed to break down the isolation between the outlying neighborhoods and the historic center. President Sarkozy convened a meeting of prominent architects and asked them to come up with a new blueprint for Paris designed to clean up the city’s working-class and immigrant suburbs and, at the same time, build a greener Paris. They put forward proposals for modest improvements, such as building more public parks in the suburbs and putting bigger windows that would let in more light in working-class apartment blocks. More daring architects suggest ideas such as moving the presidential palace to the city’s grittiest outlying neighborhoods, burying the tracks that connect the city’s main train stations and draping a vast system of public parks over them that would connect center and periphery, and building a commuter line and multitiered mall underneath the Louvre so that immigrants and workers would mix with tourists in the city’s great palace of culture.<sup>85</sup> At the moment, such plans exist only in theory. But if there’s one city where reality can be made to conform to theory, it’s Paris.

## THE CITY OF AMBITION

*In 1995, Daniel's wife, Bing, was awarded a fellowship to pursue a master's degree in law at New York University. For the next academic year, the couple lived in a subsidized university apartment facing Washington Square in Greenwich Village. Their baby, Julien, was less than a year old, and Bing's parents also lived in the one-bedroom apartment to help with child-rearing. The living quarters were cramped—the parents slept in the bedroom; Bing, Daniel, and Julien slept on a mat in the living room; and visiting friends slept under the kitchen table—but it was a happy time. Every morning, Daniel would take Julien to the apartment window, stick Julien's head out, and show him the Empire State Building on the right side, and the World Trade Center on the left. On September 11, 2001, however, Daniel learned that not everybody was equally enamored of Manhattan's skyline.*

In 1998, the then mayor of New York, Rudolph Giuliani, ended his second inaugural address on a high note: “I ask God to bless us and our great city—the capital of the world now and forever.” Such an expression of civicism would seem absurdly bombastic and inappropriate in any city other than New York. What makes New York “the capital of the world”? The mayor was not referring to the fact the United Nations makes its home in New York. Rather, he meant that New York is the capital of the financial and business worlds. But economic power isn't enough: “The greatest and most successful cities have always been those in which the arts have flourished and grown. It is in music, drama, dance, paintings, sculpture, and architecture created, and in the writings of our philosophers, theologians, poets, novelists, and historians that we define ourselves for future generations—not only for future generations of New Yorkers, but of Americans and people around the world. The most precious legacies of great cities are the great works of art they give the world.”<sup>1</sup> So New York is the capital of the world because it's the world's economically most powerful city and also because of its great, unparalleled contributions to the world of culture. To borrow the language of mathematics, New York is Hong Kong plus Paris times two. One might ask, how exactly did New York become the “capital of the world”?

There are several reasons, but the key factor is that the city has succeeded in attracting a continuous stream of talented and ambitious immigrants from other parts of the country and the world at large.

New York's greatness came at a substantial cost, however. The city was not built on a foundation of imperial expansion like some great European cities, but its rise to economic prominence was accompanied by severe injustices, such as slavery and callous exploitation of the working class. Moreover, the by-products of the city's success—alienation, loneliness, high crime rates, and short-sighted hubris that has shaken the world capitalist system to its core—have spawned a rich literature on the ills of urban life. The dark side of ambition, in other words, is an extreme form of an individualism that is almost unique among great cities.

Yet somehow New York manages repeatedly to resurrect itself, no matter how profound the depths of its economic, social, and moral crises. Perhaps that's the source of Giuliani's confidence that New York will remain the capital of the world forever. But why does the city bounce back? How can it survive the repeated challenges to decent community life? Paradoxically, the main reason is the strong underlying sense of community in the city. New Yorkers are attached to their local neighborhoods, as documented most famously by Jane Jacobs's sympathetic account of neighborhood life in Greenwich Village.<sup>2</sup> They are also attached to the city as a whole in a way matched in few great cities, and the sense of civicism manifests itself most clearly in times of crisis. The effort to sell the slogan "I Love New York" is perhaps the most successful city-branding campaign in history, but its success is founded on genuine affection for the city and its way of life. In short, New York-style civicism constrains the pursuit of ambition; without that sense of community, the city of New York would long ago have been surpassed by another capital of the world.

#### THE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

*Daniel's best childhood friend, Ira, was the son of his father's best friend in Montreal, Tevia Abrams. But Tevia was offered a job with the United Nations and he took his family to New York when Daniel was about five. From that point on, Daniel's family would make yearly trips to New York to visit the Abrams family. For Daniel, the yearly trips to New York were the highlight of his childhood: he was enthralled by the view from the top of the Empire State Building, the hustle and bustle of pedestrians, the diverse and mouth-watering food. And he dreaded the return trip back home, especially the view from the Champlain Bridge of a few lonely buildings in downtown Montreal, which inevitably reminded him his own city played in the minor leagues.*

Today, the skyscrapers of Manhattan seem like deliberate attempts to affirm the mastery of man over nature. What they replaced was the New World's equivalent of the Garden of Eden. In 1609, the English navigator Henry Hudson, employed by the Dutch West India Company to find a western sea route to the Orient, encountered a beautiful island that the Lenape Indians called "Mannahatta," meaning "island of a thousand hills." The verdant paradise had more ecological communities than Yellowstone, more native plant species than Yosemite, and more birds than the Great Smoky Mountains. Had it been left undisturbed, "it would be a national park. It would be the crowning glory of American National Parks."<sup>3</sup>

As we know, history took a different turn. The Dutch were interested in making money, and they used the island (New Amsterdam, they called it) as their economic base in the New World. In 1626, they bought the island from the Lenape Indians for sixty guilders (twenty-four U.S. dollars) worth of trinkets and other goods, which seemed like a good deal to the Lenape, who did not have a notion of private property. Spurred by international trade, New Amsterdam gradually developed into a multiethnic and major commercial city, and by the time of the last Dutch governor, Peter Stuyvesant (1647–64), it had "developed the characteristics of religious tolerance and population heterogeneity that would set it apart from other American cities."<sup>4</sup>

*The teenage Daniel paid a visit to Ira's elite public secondary school in lower Manhattan, Stuyvesant High, named after the Dutch governor. Ira had been admitted via competitive examinations, an achievement-based system entirely unfamiliar to Daniel: back in Montreal, kids tended to go to whatever public high school was closest to home (in Daniel's case, his mother had considered sending him to a private school, but she balked when the admissions officer informed her that the school offered "decadent" services such as golf lessons). Ira took Daniel to the nearby Ray's Pizzeria, which sold pizza by the slice, another unfamiliar practice. What tasty tomato sauce and so much cheese! The pizza was far superior to the insipid concoctions served in Montreal. Daniel polished off five slices. At night, Daniel observed Ira writing long essays as part of the admissions process for top-rated universities. At the time, Daniel was more focused on improving his hockey skills; he still had an outside chance (in his own mind) of playing for the Montreal Canadiens.*

In 1644, a fleet of English warships arrived in the harbor. Stuyvesant wanted to fight, but the economy-minded citizens implored their leader to accept the generous terms offered by the English commander. Stuyvesant surrendered without a fight, and the English renamed the city to honor the Duke of York; hence, New York. The city prospered under British rule, but Boston and Phila-



delphia were larger and more important cities in the eighteenth century. During the American Revolution, the British amassed a huge fleet to defend New York and easily defeated George Washington's forces in 1776, but Washington learned from the experience: he avoided major battles with the British unless the battles were to be fought on terms extraordinarily favorable to his own forces, and he kept the war going until the British tired of the human and financial sacrifices (the same strategy successfully employed by Ho Chi Minh and the North Vietnamese in their war with the United States two hundred years later).<sup>5</sup> When Washington returned to New York in 1781, he was shocked at how British forces had transformed the island into an armed barricade, describing it as "totally stripped of trees and wood of every kind."<sup>6</sup>

On April 30 1789, George Washington was sworn in as the first president of the United States on the balcony of Federal Hall at 26 Wall Street. New York, roughly half-way between Massachusetts and Virginia, appeared to be the logical choice for the new country's capital. But Thomas Jefferson, the new secretary of state, opposed the plan, and the nation's capital was moved to a swampy area along the Potomac River, a district that would later be named for the nation's first president. With politics out of the way, New York was made safe for the pursuit of economic supremacy. By 1807, New York was "the first city in the United States for wealth, commerce, and population."<sup>7</sup> Rather than recount the economic history of the city, however, let us ask *why* it became the world's premier center of commerce and finance.

Proximity to water is, historically speaking, a necessary condition for the development of great economic cities. Blessed with the most hospitable and functional harbor on the Atlantic seaboard, New York is no exception. As Calvin Tomkins explained in 1905, the city was uniquely well-placed for economic takeoff: "The only other cities which have any strategic position on the Atlantic seaboard are Montreal on the St. Lawrence and the city of New Orleans on the Gulf of Mexico. The one is interfered with by the cold of winter and the other by the heat of summer. In the case of every other city along the seaboard, the trains coming to it have to climb up over the Allegheny Mountains and down again, and the expense is heavy as compared to the level haul from the West to New York. . . . The fact that the transportation of the world is coming to its gates makes New York the city that it is."<sup>8</sup>

But geography per se can't explain New York's economic success. For one thing, the people of New York had to, and did, make full use of the city's natural advantages: they developed the first regularly scheduled shipping service in 1818, and built the Erie Canal by 1825, linking the city with the American West and shifting the country's trade axis in New York's favor.<sup>9</sup> More to the point, the relative importance of the city's port in the global economy declined

in the twentieth century, just as New York cemented its role as the “capital of capital.” In 1900, the Port of New York was the busiest port in the world,<sup>10</sup> but today it pales in economic significance compared to the ports of Singapore and Hong Kong. If the story of New York’s economic success were mainly explained by its advantageous geographical location, New York’s global economic importance should have declined along with the decline of its port. Yet the opposite occurred.

*Bing and Daniel hit the town. It’s the first time they have left baby Julien at night, and they feel guilty. But Don Giovanni, Daniel’s favorite opera, is playing at Lincoln Center (the largest performing arts venue in the country) and it’s too good an opportunity to pass up. They are moved by the music. After the opera, the under-dressed couple goes for a drink at a nearby café filled with glamorous-looking people. Poor Julien can wait a bit longer. The whole evening feels like Cinderella’s coming-out ball, except that it didn’t end at midnight. Yes, the urban planner Robert Moses forcibly cleared out old neighborhoods and displaced seven thousand people to build Lincoln Center, but the cultural institution did succeed in revitalizing the neighborhood.*<sup>11</sup>

Let us consider the possibility that New York’s history of economic success is mainly attributable to its visionary urban planners. In the twentieth century, nobody stands out more than Robert Moses: as his biographer (and sharpest critic) Robert A. Caro puts it, Moses was “America’s greatest builder. He was the shaper of the greatest city in the New World.”<sup>12</sup> Moses explicitly strove to model himself after Baron Haussmann, the visionary who made Paris into the nineteenth century’s greatest city.<sup>13</sup> Moses’s plans for remaking the city came at the right time: New Yorkers were thinking big. The unification of Manhattan, the Bronx, Staten Island, Queens, and Brooklyn into the “Greater City of New York” in 1898 instantly doubled the city’s population and its geographical reach from the twenty-three square miles of Manhattan to more than three hundred square miles, all unified under one municipal government.<sup>14</sup> The Brooklyn Bridge, the greatest engineering project of its age, had linked the hearts of Manhattan and Brooklyn in 1883, but more infrastructure projects were needed. In came Moses, who, starting in the 1930s, built an almost invincible power base. The Great Depression struck New York harder than any other American city,<sup>15</sup> and Moses put the city back to work. As the head of various commissions, authorities, and agencies, he built vast bridges, tunnels, and expressways that opened up New York to its suburbs and linked its diverse boroughs. Without these infrastructural developments, New York would have declined into economic irrelevance.<sup>16</sup>

Moses also expanded the public realm with extensive recreational facilities. His most famous early project, Jones Beach, has been beloved by generations of heat-weary New Yorkers. He sought to make Manhattan more livable for the middle class by building cultural facilities. In total, Moses

was responsible for thirteen bridges, two tunnels, 637 miles of highways, 658 playgrounds, ten giant public swimming pools, seventeen state parks, and dozens of new or renovated city parks. He cleared three hundred acres of city land and constructed towers that contained 28,400 new apartments. He built Lincoln Center, the United Nations, Shea Stadium, Jones Beach, and the Central Park Zoo. He built the Triborough and Verrazano-Narrows bridges, the Long Island and Cross-Bronx expressways, parkways down the side of Manhattan and north and east of the city, avenues, overpasses, causeways, and viaducts. Any New Yorker or visitor to the city has at one time or another driven down, walked through, sat in, or sailed into something that Moses created.<sup>17</sup>

It seems fair to add that most New Yorkers and visitors to the city have *benefited* from Moses's creations. So why is Moses—unlike Paris's Baron Haussmann and Singapore's Goh Keng Swee—such a demonized figure in the history of urban planning, notwithstanding recent efforts to reevaluate his legacy?

One obvious objection is that political actors are supposed to be elected and held accountable in democracies, but Moses never held public office (in 1934, he did run as a Republican for governor of New York but lost badly to his Democratic opponent). Moses's model here was Haussmann, whom he described admiringly “as a talker, an ogre for work, despotic, insolvent, full of initiative and daring, and caring not a straw for legality. Everything about him as on a grand scale. . . . [His] dictatorial talents enabled him to accomplish a vast amount in a very short time, but they also made him many enemies, for he was in the habit of riding roughshod over all opposition.”<sup>18</sup> What's interesting—and impressive, in a sense—is that Moses managed to accumulate Haussmann-like powers without the backing of a dictator: he exercised power by heading commissions that allowed him to draft legislation and appropriate funds, running aggressive public relations campaigns, and acting fast with land acquisition and with laying asphalt so that projects gained a momentum all their own.<sup>19</sup> In practice, his power could not be challenged seriously by any governor of New York State or mayor of New York City from 1934 to 1968 (a longer reign than Haussmann himself had).<sup>20</sup> Moses's exercise of power is certainly problematic from a democratic point of view, but how else can great cities undertake large-scale infrastructure projects? Today, “New York cannot manage to find the resources for the most

minimal infrastructural improvements that are essential to a world city.”<sup>21</sup> In an otherwise critical perspective on the Moses legacy, Anthony Flint comments that “among government, business, and civic leaders in New York who have been frustrated by what they see as paralysis, there has even been talk of the need for a new Robert Moses, to supply basic infrastructure and the big projects needed to propel the city as a competitive economic center for the twenty-first century. Projects on the scale of those of Moses could not take place today, as the kind of thoughtful citizen involvement Jacobs envisioned has evolved into mere NIM-BYism—the protest of ‘not in my own backyard.’ Citizen opposition now brings even modest projects to a grinding halt.”<sup>22</sup>

Critics also object to the brutal way Moses carried out urban development. Caro estimates that for his public works projects, Moses evicted a half million people from their homes, and “more significant even than the number of the dispossessed were their characteristics: a disproportionate share of them were black, Puerto Rican—and poor.”<sup>23</sup> But Moses made no apology for his methods: “You cannot build a city without moving people. You cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs. . . . We do indeed sympathize with tenants and do everything possible to help them, but we cannot give everybody and his lawyer what they want.”<sup>24</sup> Haussmann was equally brutal in his methods (the Parisian poor were expropriated or forced outside of the city center by expensive rents), yet he is still held in high regard overall. And it’s worth asking again about the likely alternatives: in many other American cities, the middle class and the rich fled to the suburbs and the downtown core went into steep economic decline. Moses’s urban development projects helped keep the middle and upper classes in Manhattan, thus contributing to the economic revitalization of the city, and arguably the economic growth and larger tax base eventually helped the poor as well.

Moses-style urban renewal has also been criticized on aesthetic grounds. Moses razed neighborhoods and built “big rectangular structures and cruciform, X-shaped towers on what became known as superblocks. . . . Increasingly, Moses abandoned the attention to fine details that characterized Jones Beach and the swimming pools and bathhouses, instead focusing on the number of new apartments—just as his later expressways, built with the single goal of the swift flow of traffic, possess none of the charm of his wooden-guardrailed parkways.”<sup>25</sup> These cold and uninviting towers are blamed for the deterioration of affordable housing in New York: because the residents did not identify with such ugly and alienating structures, the superblocks eventually fell into disrepair and became dangerous and crime-ridden. But the problem may not lie with ugly buildings per se: the governments of Hong Kong and Singapore similarly destroyed old neighborhoods and replaced them with ugly public housing super-

blocks on an even larger scale, yet they are regarded as relatively successful housing programs for the poor and middle classes.

Perhaps the key reason for Moses's bad reputation today is his excessive faith in the automobile as the emblem of modern development. Drawing on Le Corbusier's vision of huge towers linked by parks and highways, Moses proposed building a Lower Manhattan Expressway that would run through what is now Soho. The urban activist Jane Jacobs galvanized opposition to the proposed highway on the grounds that it would destroy potentially vibrant neighborhoods and actually increase traffic. Jacobs won the battle—the city government rejected the expressway in 1964—and she proved to be correct on both counts. Once the plan for the expressway was shelved, Soho came back to life as investors poured in money without fear of being expropriated. Today, Soho is a remarkable urban success story, famous for its cast-iron buildings, bistros, designer shops, and art galleries. And Jacobs's then counterintuitive argument that building new highways just invites more traffic that quickly fills the lanes to capacity is now widely accepted (unfortunately, it is less accepted in Beijing). Portland has erased a freeway through its downtown and even Los Angeles has given up on bumper-to-bumper highways; more and more American politicians are seeking to shift federal funding from highways to public transit, streetcars, and high-speed rail for a more balanced transportation system. In the final analysis, Moses was on the wrong side of history, but mainly because of what he tried to do rather than how he tried to do it: "Had Moses been in charge of building the world's greatest transit system, he would be cheered today no matter how many people he had uprooted."<sup>26</sup>

Moses fell from grace and left New York in bad shape. In the mid-1970s, the city experienced a deep economic crisis and became synonymous with crime and social disorder. Yet twenty years later, New York entered a period of optimism and economic revival that it hadn't seen in a half century. The city was helped by pragmatic political leaders such as Rudolph Giuliani and the current mayor, Michael Bloomberg, but it rose from the ashes without the aid of an urban visionary like Moses. So let us return to our original question. What's the key explanation for New York's success as the world's premier economic city? If it's not really about geography and visionary urban planning, then what's the X factor?

*Singapore, November 1993. Daniel receives a fax from the distinguished New York intellectual Daniel Bell. It begins: "I suppose that anyone named John Smith is accustomed to seeing that name in many places, even on books when each of the John Smiths are authors. But it was quite a surprise to see an advertisement in the TLS [Times Literary Supplement] by Oxford University Press for a book by Daniel Bell on Communitarianism and Its Critics, and not have that Daniel Bell identi-*

*fied other than by that name.” Bell goes on to explain that he has also written on communitarian themes and ends his letter by saying, “In any event, out of obvious curiosity, I would like to learn a bit more about your background and thinking.”*

*Daniel replies with a fax explaining his family heritage: “Fleeing the Russian pogroms with little more than a shirt on his back, my great-grandfather Daniel Belitsky disembarked at Ellis Island in 1905 along with thousands of other Jewish immigrants to the new world.” Daniel explains that his grandfather shortened his name to Bell so as to better fit with the Gentile mainstream, and that he hoped that one of his sons would name a child “Daniel” in honor of his father. So that’s how Daniel got his name.*

*Within a couple of hours, Daniel receives another fax from Daniel Bell: “There are many extraordinary parallels in your account. My grandfather, Avram Bolotsky, came to Ellis Island ca. 1905 from the triangle of Lithuania-Poland-Russia. . . . My uncle, who was my legal guardian, was a dentist, Samuel Bolotsky, who took the name Bell, when I was about ten years old in 1929. So, from 1929, I was Daniel Bell.”*

*The two Daniel Bells pursue an almost daily faxed correspondence. The younger Bell says that his book on communitarianism had been classified in the Library of Congress as sociology instead of political theory. The elder Bell replies: “Leave it for two reasons: one, if you apply for a job in “democratic” China, you can cite a long and thick bibliography (I am appending an abbreviated c.v.).<sup>27</sup> The other reason is that since you will be writing for a long time, a Chinese scholar in the future may be astounded by the discovery of the incredible longevity of a Daniel Bell with over ninety years of productivity.”*

*Bell the younger replies: “Thanks for your C.V.—I’ll definitely make use of it if I apply for jobs in a democratic China, but even if my potential employers find it plausible that I could have written so many books there’s the larger problem that we’ll most likely have to wait several hundred years before we see a democratic system in China.”*

*The two Daniel Bells eventually agree that the younger one should use the initial “A” in future publications so as to avoid further mix-ups. It doesn’t always work out as planned, however. Daniel A. Bell finds a job in not-so-democratic China and still gets confused with the “real” Daniel Bell when he is invited to give lectures at Chinese universities.<sup>28</sup>*

New York has a long history of drawing immigrants in search of a better life: “On island of Manhate, and its environs, there may well be four to five hundred men of different sects and nations” and “eighteen different languages,” noted Father Jogues in 1643.<sup>29</sup> But really massive immigration started only in the nineteenth century. In 1860, the poet Walt Whitman captured the exuberant mood of the city:



Immigrants arriving at Ellis Island 1908. Photograph © Lewis Wickes Hine/Bettmann/Corbis.

Immigrants arriving fifteen or twenty-thousand a week. . . .

A million people—manners free and superb—open voices—

hospitality—the most courageous and friendly young men;

The free city! no slaves! no owners of slaves!

The beautiful city! the city of hurried and sparkling waters! the city of  
spires and masts!

The city nested in bays! my city!<sup>30</sup>

Whitman was referring mainly to (white) immigrants from the German states and from Ireland: in 1860, more than two hundred thousand New Yorkers hailed from Ireland, and nearly one hundred twenty thousand more from the German states.<sup>31</sup> Germany and Ireland continued to be the main suppliers of immigrants in the late nineteenth century, but they were joined by new waves of immigrants from eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, and China: “the influx of eastern European Jews, Italians, and Chinese confirmed that New York would now become a city for all the world, and in numbers on a scale unheard of in history.”<sup>32</sup> Starting in 1886, the immigrants were greeted by the Statue of Liberty, the tallest structure in New York at the time. The statue was originally in-

tended to show support for the Union cause in the Civil War, but it conveyed a message of welcome and uplift to the immigrant (Emma Lazarus had been moved by the plight of the Russian Jews and wrote the immortal words that were cast in bronze and fixed to the statue in 1903: “Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free”). In 1892, the U.S. government built facilities for processing immigrants on nearby Ellis Island: about twelve million immigrants passed through Ellis Island over the succeeding fifty years, and more than 40 percent of the American population (not to mention Canadians) has at least one ancestor who passed through the island.<sup>33</sup> Why does this matter? Because the millions of diverse and highly ambitious immigrants made New York into the “capital of the world” in the twentieth century. That’s the X factor. E. B. White’s essay (1949) “Here Is New York,” the most quoted piece of prose about New York City, put it well:

There are roughly three New Yorks. There is, first, the New York of the man or woman who was born here, who takes the city for granted and accepts its size and its turbulence as natural and inevitable. Second, there is the New York of the commuter—the city that is devoured by locusts each day and spat out each night. Third, there is the New York of the person who was born somewhere else and came to New York in quest of something. Of these three trembling cities the greatest is the last—the city of final destination, the city that is a goal. It is this third city that accounts for New York’s high-strung disposition, its poetical temperament, its dedication to the arts, and its incomparable achievements. Commuters give the city its tidal restlessness; natives give it solidity and continuity; but the settlers give it passion.<sup>34</sup>

Changes in immigration policy in the 1920s radically limited new immigration, but the flood of immigrants resumed in the 1990s, when a million foreigners came to New York, mainly from the Caribbean, Central America, and Asia. The 2000 census shows that today, 40 percent of the city’s inhabitants are foreign born (most likely an underestimate that doesn’t count illegal immigrants), a percentage similar to that in 1910 at the peak of the “New Immigration.”<sup>35</sup> Immigration, Eric Homberger notes, “is perhaps the greatest of all the ideas that serve to unite New Yorkers.”<sup>36</sup> The reason is obvious: because immigrants, filled with ambition to “strike it big,” provided the energy and dynamism that made the city into the capital of the world.

*Cambridge, Massachusetts, December 1994. Daniel and Bing are invited for dinner at the home of Daniel Bell the elder and his wife, Pearl. Asked about his future*



*plans, Daniel tells the Bells that he is applying for jobs in Hong Kong. Pearl expresses disapproval: Isn't that city just about making money? What about culture? She says she couldn't live in a city without a vibrant cultural scene. Isn't it better to live in New York?*

New York is both the capital of capital and the capital of culture. But how did that happen? After all, Hong Kong is also composed of ambitious immigrants who made the city rich, and yet it didn't develop anything like New York's vibrant cultural scene. What explains the difference? Perhaps it's a function of size: New York (population eight million) has a larger talent pool. But that can't be the key explanation: few would dispute the claim that New York's contribution to the world of literature, music, painting, and theater is far out of proportion to its population. Perhaps it's the freedom to create? But Hong Kong has a long history of civil freedom; its people were rarely constrained from creating works of art for political reasons. Perhaps New York was lucky to have public-spirited capitalists who used their wealth to promote culture? That's part of it. By the end of the nineteenth century, newly rich "robber barons" such as Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jay Gould, and J. P. Morgan spent their money on cultural institutions like the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the American Museum of Natural History.<sup>37</sup> But New York is famous not just for preserving great works of art in museums, but even more for creativity and innovation in the world of art.

*Daniel's great-grandfather Daniel Belitsky eventually moved from New York to Montreal, where he had a sister. One of his five children, named Sam, went to New York to seek his fortune. In New York, Sam met and married his wife, Claire, and they had three children, two of whom were born in New York (Daniel's father, Don, and his uncle, Arthur). Sam was offered a tryout with the New York Rangers hockey team, but he turned it down (the story goes) because of the low pay and possible discrimination against Jewish hockey players. He tried his hand at business without much success, and the family moved to Montreal to start a business with the financial backing of Sam's elder brother, Maurice. But young Arthur felt constrained in Montreal. He decided to move back to New York at the age of eighteen, telling his parents that he preferred the theater scene in New York. Arthur went on to a successful career as the author of two books and an entertainment columnist for the Village Voice with his column "Bell Tells." He was also one of the first gays to "come out of the closet," helping to found the Gay Activists Alliance. His parents were upset at first but eventually took pride in their son's achievements. Arthur died of complications of diabetes in 1984 at the age of fifty-one. Daniel has fond memories of Arthur, who procured tickets for special Broadway musicals (such as Carol*

*Channing's thousandth performance in Hello, Dolly!) and high-profile concerts (like the Rolling Stones at Madison Square Garden) whenever Daniel visited New York. The Village Voice organized a memorial service for Arthur that was attended by several hundred members of the gay community. Daniel recalls being moved by scenes of his elderly grandfather embracing and shedding tears with a string of Arthur's former boyfriends at the memorial service.*

People go to New York because it is seen as the land of promise, the place to realize one's potential. As the architect Robert A. M. Stern describes the process, "you can come here and invent yourself or can be born here and reinvent yourself, and you can change yourself. And if you can change yourself, presumably, you are also changing the whole structure of the world that you operate in, in order to make your fictive reality come alive."<sup>38</sup> But what makes the process of change so creative is that there are so many different starting points. Perhaps the main reason for the explosion of new forms of culture in New York is the *diversity* of its immigrant pool.

*Daniel is invited to give a talk at the United Nations. As he steps into the building he notices the ethnically diverse group of people inside, but then he realizes that it's just as diverse outside. He can't think of another city where the "United Nations" also exists on the city's streets.*

New York City has been the destination for "a hundred immigrant streams deluging the city at levels unprecedented since the 1920s," and the city became less than half white at some point during the 1980s.<sup>39</sup> Different kinds of immigrants from a radically different range of ethnic, linguistic,<sup>40</sup> and social backgrounds are bound to be confronted with new perspectives, to question old ways of doing things, and to innovate. That's why New York is filled with so many diverse restaurants, including combinations like Cuban-Chinese and Brazilian-Japanese. That's why new forms of music emerge that eventually take the world by storm: bebop, mambo, punk, disco, and hip-hop.<sup>41</sup> And that's why new social movements, such as the gay liberation movement and feminism,<sup>42</sup> originate and flourish in New York. All these innovations must rest on a foundation of freedom and wealth,<sup>43</sup> but the clash of perspectives of diverse kinds of ambitious people is what makes New York into the capital of the world.<sup>44</sup>

#### AMBITION VERSUS COMMUNITY

*New York, December 31, 1983. Daniel goes to Queens to meet his close friend Tatiana at the home of Tatiana's childhood friend, Jane. The trio then drives in Tati-*

*ana's old Mercedes Benz to Manhattan for New Year's Eve. They park a few blocks away from Times Square and walk through the throngs of happy people to watch the ball drop from the Times Tower, a tradition that dates back to 1907. They kiss strangers in Times Square at the stroke of midnight. A friend has somehow secured a penthouse in a nearby building, and they go there to drink champagne. A few bottles later, they walk back to the car. But the streets are not so welcoming anymore. No cars or cops. Sidewalks strewn with liquor bottles and used needles. A few prostitutes and pimps. Packs of young thugs on street corners. Drug addicts asleep or dead. Daniel and his two female friends pick up their pace. A filthy, bearded man emerges from an open sewer—is it possible?—and approaches the trio. Jane panics. She screams and bursts out crying. It seems to work: they have joined the community of crazy people. They are left alone and run to the car. It's a miracle: the Mercedes has not yet been vandalized!*

City life has often been viewed as individualistic and morally decadent, as the antithesis of decent communal life. In biblical times, city people were portrayed as particularly corrupt (think of Sodom and Nineveh). Cities were often described, especially by prophets, as cities “of blood” or “of murderers” (Ezekiel 22:2; Ezekiel 24:6; Nahum 3:1), of fear (Jeremiah 15:8), and full of theft and violence (Ezekiel 7:23). Leaders who came from rural backgrounds were thought to be innocent and free of sin. Moses left urban Egyptian sprawl to find God in the wilderness. When the people of Israel demanded to have a king like every other nation, Samuel went searching for one in the countryside. He found Saul and, after him, David, who before being appointed used to shepherd his father's flock in the hills around Bethlehem.<sup>45</sup>

The city makes its first appearance in the Bible in the story of the Tower of Babel:

Everyone on earth used to speak the same language and the same words. As people migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar [Babylon] and settled there. . . . [T]hey said, “Let us build a city for ourselves, with a tower that reaches to heaven, so that we can make a name for ourselves and will not be scattered all over the earth.” But the Lord came down to inspect the city and tower that the people had built. Then the Lord said, “It is because they are one people and all speak the same language that they have been able to undertake this—in fact, nothing that they set out to do will be impossible for them. Let us go down and confuse their speech, so that they will not understand what they are saying to each other.” Thus the Lord scattered them from there all over the earth, and the building of the city was stopped. (Gen. 11:1–9)

The point of this story seems pretty clear: it just did not seem right that humans should try to reach the realm of the divine, perhaps even challenging God's rule in the process; the arrogance of the idea must have been what caused God to frustrate their plans, to halt construction of the half-built tower and confuse their speech in order to stop their urban building mania. The story, in other words, seems to be a parable of human hubris and divine retribution, a not-so-subtle warning to overly ambitious human beings who seek to "make a name" for themselves: we should not think too much of ourselves and too little of God.<sup>46</sup>

Viewed within this moral framework, the story of New York seems equally clear: it's a model of arrogance, the revenge of godless human beings, a gathering of diverse peoples from around the world who are molded into speaking a common language and who resume their urban building mania. New Yorkers destroyed the Garden of Eden and replaced it with towers reaching to heaven in order to assert man's mastery over God and his creations.

Already in the nineteenth century, before the skyscrapers were built, New York's unique drive for nighttime supremacy (the use of artificial light in New York was much more widespread than in London or Paris) seemed to be sending the message that "the mightiness of human construction replaces religious wonder at the divinely driven power of the natural world."<sup>47</sup> Man was finally successful at challenging the biblical adage that concretely expresses our limitations: "The night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4). In 1916, new zoning laws allowing for towers without height restriction (covering an area not to exceed 25 percent of the lot) came into effect, thus ushering in the age of the skyscraper, the greatest architectural innovation of its time. Skyscrapers had symbolic significance as icons of progress or, as David Nye calls them, "geometrical sublimes."<sup>48</sup> They reflected enthusiasm for technology and man's victory over natural and physical obstacles. Le Corbusier is "intoxicated" as he observes the nighttime Manhattan skyline: "It is a Milky Way come down to earth; you are in it."<sup>49</sup> The most dazzling high-rise of its time was Cass Gilbert's 1913 Woolworth Building, the corporate headquarters of the revolutionary retailer that invented the idea of low prices at high volume, with all the merchandise on display. Gilbert's use of neo-Gothic tracery gives the building a medieval feel and "led the Brooklyn minister S. Parkes Cadman to dub it 'the Cathedral of Commerce' at its opening gala. Cadman was not only making a commentary on its architectural style but on the fact that in the battle between God and Mammon, Mammon appeared to be winning."<sup>50</sup> In 1929, the Chrysler Building bested the height of the Woolworth Building, only to be bested two years later by the Empire State Building.

But the Empire State Building opened at the height of the Great Depression, few tenants could be found, and people took to calling it the "Empty State

Building.”<sup>51</sup> The Great Depression itself was triggered by hubris in the world of speculation and finance, seeming to confirm the view of the abolitionist Lydia Maria Child that “in Wall Street . . . Mammon, as usual, coolly calculates his chance of extracting a penny from war, pestilence, and famine; and Commerce, with her loaded drays, and jaded skeletons of horses, is busy as ever ‘fulfilling the World’s contract with the Devil.’”<sup>52</sup> The Empire State Building, as we know, eventually filled up with tenants and became one of New York’s most beloved symbols. Its height was finally surpassed by the World Trade Center, completed in 1971. The “pretentious and arrogant”<sup>53</sup> buildings quickly became the most hated structures in the city, but they successfully revitalized the financial district. After they were destroyed on September 11, 2001, the religious evangelist Jerry Falwell attributed the terrorist attack to Providence, angered by the debauchery of morally decadent sinners: “I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America. I point the finger in their face and say ‘you helped this happen.’”<sup>54</sup>

In short, to its religious critics New York has come to symbolize a city where the hand of godless man has replaced the hand of God. Ambrose Bierce put it most succinctly when he defined *Mammon* in his *Devil’s Dictionary* as “The God of the world’s leading religion. His chief temple is the holy city of New York.”<sup>55</sup> It is certainly possible to criticize such perspectives, especially the views of ideologues like Jerry Falwell. Still, we must recognize that the blind pursuit of individualistic ambition does have some costs.

*Avner feels bothered by Manhattan’s street grid. The streets are nameless but numbered, as if to declare: we place no greater value on this event or that person. What’s more, the avenues seem never to end. They go on and on, crossed by seemingly innumerable numbered streets. Imagine yourself as a five-year-old. Now, go, stand on Fifth Avenue during rush hour. But don’t stand as you are. A five-year-old’s height is about one meter. Bend and observe what you see from this height. You will probably see movement. You will see legs moving fast, you will see sunshine and shadows replacing each other. You will not know these legs, who they belong to. It is difficult to move from one place to another while you are on the street. It is not safe, distances are long, and there is no place for privacy. One must join the wave of people who walk forward. Adults seem to know their destinations and directions. But if you are a child not sure of your direction, whether to keep going straight, turn left, or whatever, you would want to stop from time to time. You’d like to look around you and see whether you are going the right way, whether you should keep on going. But you*

*can't stop. If you stop all of a sudden, if you turn backward, if you hesitate, people might walk over you, through you, at you. Pedestrians in Manhattan's commercial district have no time for hesitation. They do not expect you to stop and wonder. So children do not walk in Manhattan. This is alienation.*

Manhattan's street grid was set out in 1811 and designed to impose some order on a city that was growing rapidly in population. The hills of Manhattan were leveled and new rectilinear streets were laid out for the undeveloped part of the island north of Washington Square. The commissioners entrusted to lay out the streets dismissed out of hand the "supposed improvements by circles, ovals, and stars" that characterized Pierre Charles L'Enfant's plan for the political capital of Washington, DC (and were later to characterize Haussmann's Paris). Instead, the primary motivation for the grid plan was to exploit real estate. Recalling that New York was to be composed "principally of the habitations of men," they favored "straight-sided and right angled houses [which] are the most cheap to build and the most convenient to live in."<sup>56</sup> Unlike Paris or London, there was to be little space left for parks on the grounds that since "the prices of land are so uncommonly great, it seems proper to admit the principles of economy."<sup>57</sup> The subsequent growth in the value of real estate was an incomparable speculative investment, leading to the great nineteenth-century New York property empires (owned by the Astors, the Wendels, and others) as well as small apartments and high rents for most of the city's inhabitants.

A long line of architectural critics have deplored the rectangular grid as monotonous and soulless. In 1902, Jean Schopfer wrote, "New York, from that time on, grew like a child in an orthopaedic corset. There were no places set apart in the plan for sparkling fountains under shady trees; no edifice to interrupt the monotony of eternally straight and parallel lines; and the streets, each with its number like a convict in a prison; and the avenues, all the avenues, stretched onward, onward indefinitely, with the sky for background; and not an inch of land is lost."<sup>58</sup> Lewis Mumford's influential 1961 work *The City in History* denounced the grid as spectacularly inefficient and wasteful, best suited for the capitalist conversion of natural resources into a medium for speculation and exploitation.<sup>59</sup>

*Daniel and Tatiana meet near Central Park with another friend, Lena, a designer in a leading house of fashion. It's a beautiful spring day. Lena knows what's hip. No need for a map; it's impossible to get lost with the numbered streets. They walk and walk, all the way to Washington Square, stopping every few minutes at boutique hotels, charming exhibits, and cool cafés. What a culture of riches! What a lovely way to spend an afternoon!*

Yet the grid also had a positive legacy: New York developed into one of the most pedestrian-friendly cities in the United States, a city best experienced by strollers and gazers. The original commissioners of the grid eliminated alleys to allow for bigger, more desirable lots, reflecting the reality that very few in New York would ever have the means to own a horse and carriage. Thus, there was no need for rear stables.<sup>60</sup> No parks, but also no parking for horse carriages or, later, for cars. As Nathan Glazer puts it, “I think the interest in New York is sparked and maintained by the fact that it is a city shaped and in large measure completed before the age of the automobile.”<sup>61</sup> Today, fewer than 20 percent of Manhattan residents own cars, and the sidewalks of Manhattan are bustling and filled with pedestrians.<sup>62</sup>

*Daniel is invited to give some talks in the New York area and he stays at the apartment of Judy and Tevia Abrams on the upper East Side of Manhattan, a few blocks from “Museum Mile.” His clothes are all crumpled from travel and he steps outside looking for a dry cleaner. To his pleasant surprise, every single block seems to have one. The following year, Daniel goes to Jerusalem to work on this book with Avner. He stays in an apartment on Mount Scopus, and roams the streets looking for a nearby dry cleaner. No luck. Only half-joking, Avner advises Daniel that he should go to Tel Aviv to find a dry cleaner.*

Cynthia Ozick writes: “What Manhattan talks about, obliquely or openly—what it thinks about, whatever the season, is ambition.”<sup>63</sup> Who makes it, who doesn’t, that’s what matters. The conversation goes straight to job talk and quick evaluations are made of one’s place in the social pecking order. It’s not as enjoyable as Paris-style conversation, but if it’s just talk, what’s the big deal? Yes, it’s the world of appearances, but who has time to explore another person’s Being in a city that prioritizes ambition? If people seek recognition for their accomplishments, why not give them a bit of face? As the New York University sociologist Steven Lukes put it, vanity is the least bad of human sins.<sup>64</sup> So let’s talk about the really bad ones.

*Avner’s hotel room window in downtown Manhattan gives him the illusion that he is watching a film on a wide-screen TV. If he wants, he can open the window and let the noise in, or he can shut it and turn the noise off. He watches as a limousine stops and a movie star gets out, almost stepping on a homeless person. Bystanders take photos of the celebrity. Another scene outside: A worker comes to clean the public garbage cans. He lifts one in order to empty its contents into a large plastic bag. Maybe because of the cold, he drops the can and the garbage spills onto him. It is very wet, and his trousers and shoes get muddy and filthy. He bends to pick up the*

*garbage. People pass by. Nobody stops to help him. Avner recalls a line from one of Leonard Cohen's songs: "Oh, please don't pass me by, for I am blind, but you can see."<sup>65</sup> But it is not the worker, begging these people not to pass him by, who is "blind." People have become blind, blind with indifference to other people's agony and misery. If Manhattan does not always cause injustice, it certainly makes people indifferent to it.*

The arrival of Peter Stuyvesant in 1647 brought relative prosperity and growth to New Amsterdam, and also some of the New World's first slaves, many of them imported by the Dutch West India Company from the Caribbean or directly from Africa in what was becoming one of the company's most profitable industries.<sup>66</sup> After the Dutch left, the slave trade continued to grow in economic importance: "In the eighteenth century, New York merchants began a leap of imagination and ambition that took the city onto the world stage. It was the determination of sea captains and traders to enter the slave trade—thus creating the famous triangular trade route that brought English goods and West African slaves to New York (the slave auction was located at the foot of Wall Street)—that brought the city to a new role in the world economy."<sup>67</sup> In 1746, when New York had a population of 11,720, slightly more than one-fifth of the inhabitants were slaves, the highest concentration of slaves north of Virginia. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, New York's slave holdings had become the nation's second largest after Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>68</sup> Slavery was abolished in New York in 1827, but "it is necessary even now to stress that slavery was integral to the development of New York."<sup>69</sup>

The end of legal discrimination did not, unfortunately, end the reality of discrimination. In 1863, the Civil War Draft Riots in New York—the single worst civil disturbance in American history—resulted in the deaths of several hundred blacks at the hands of crazed mobs.<sup>70</sup> The arrival of Irish and Germans in the same period drove blacks out of the employment fields in which they had formerly had a presence, such as domestic service, barbering, and shoe blacking. Immigrant artisans and mechanics excluded black competitors from their trades, and blacks were left with the least remunerative employment, as servants and waiters. In the second half of the nineteenth century, there was little economic opportunity to attract blacks from other regions and New York's black community shrank as a proportion of the city's total population.

The great migration of blacks from the South took place in the twentieth century. New York City was a principal magnet for African Americans aiming to better their lives and to escape rural poverty and the effects of Jim Crow laws. Between 1900 and 1940, the black population of the city rose from 58,142 to 418,857, and it nearly doubled again between 1940 and 1960. Harlem estab-



lished itself as a black cultural center in the first decades of the twentieth century, and the Harlem Renaissance led to a flowering of music and literature. But the arrival of blacks in Harlem was marked by hostility, fear, and open opposition from white residents. A panicky “white flight” followed, leading to a collapse of property values, rising unemployment, and deterioration of the economic position of black families in Harlem. The decline of Harlem began with the Depression and reached its nadir in the 1970s, when Harlem became a byword for crime and social chaos.<sup>71</sup>

*Summer 1987. Daniel visits New York with his leather-clad Cuban-American friend Emilio. Emilio is driving, and Daniel asks to see Harlem. Another friend in the car notices that Emilio’s window is partially open and asks him to close it. Emilio refuses and deliberately rolls down his window the whole way. Daniel does the same. They drive through Harlem and it’s not as “bad” as Daniel expects.*

The decline began to reverse in the 1980s, when the city as a whole climbed out of the deep pit into which it had sunk in the financial collapse of the 1970s. Today, Harlem is one of New York’s most vibrant neighborhoods and attracts people of all ethnicities who are seeking bargains, more space, and a sense of community.<sup>72</sup> Busloads of tourists, white and black, crowd the streets.

*Early 1990s. Avner comes to New York for a conference. He cannot find the hotel at night, and he keeps asking people for directions. Later he finds out that he has the wrong address. But nobody stops to answer him or even pay attention to his question. Fifteen years later, in 2007, Avner makes another trip to New York to lecture and raise money for Hebrew University. After the lecture (close to Columbia University), seeing that it’s a beautiful day, he decides to stroll a bit and talk to people; maybe he can get a good story for our book. He walks about ten minutes and suddenly finds himself in the middle of Harlem. People are charming and friendly and he chats with fellow pedestrians.*

The point here is not to suggest that racial and other forms of injustice in New York City no longer exist. Family backgrounds and historical legacies influence outcomes, even long after institutional discrimination ends. The city is still a nation of contrasts, essentially divided between those who make it and those who don’t. And those who make it often make it on the backs of those who don’t. But the most egregious and visible forms of injustice have been eliminated, which makes it even more of a challenge to remind New Yorkers of the need to equalize opportunities and care for the “have-nots.”

*Daniel speaks to a friend who works for a New York law firm. She tells Daniel that she was very cautious when she first started working for the firm, not wanting to speak up without a thorough understanding of the legal issues. But she observed her colleagues being rewarded for speaking up with confidence about complex and ambiguous legal issues (the partners were too busy to familiarize themselves with the details of the legal issues at stake). Eventually, she learned to speak with authority about issues that she knew were more complex and ambiguous than she was letting on, and her career took a turn for the better.*

In Joseph O'Neill's novel *Netherland*, Vinay, an ambitious food critic from Bangalore, supports himself by writing a magazine column about cheap, little-known New York restaurants. But the sheer variety of foodstuffs bothers him: "One night it's Cantonese, then it's Georgian, then it's Indonesian, then Syrian. I mean, I think this shit is good baklava, but what the fuck do I know, really? How can I be sure?" Yet when he writes, Vinay exudes bright certainty and expertise. The book's narrator, Hans, a Dutch-born equities analyst, comments: "Similar misgivings, I should say, had begun to infect my own efforts at work. These efforts required me, sitting at my desk on the twenty-second floor of a glassy tower, to express reliable opinions about the current and future valuation of certain oil and gas stocks. . . . I felt like Vinay, cooking up myths from scraps and peels of fact."<sup>73</sup>

But that's part of the game. Ambitious people are not supposed to be cautious; they go out on a ledge and hope things work out. They learn to speak with certainty about uncertainty.<sup>74</sup> Sometimes it pays off and sometimes it doesn't. In a casino, the winners are winners and the losers are losers. On Wall Street, however, it's not so simple. The gamblers make big bets and the losses affect other people. The bigger the losses, the greater the damage. In the worst case, the whole capitalist system takes a huge hit.

As the capital of capital, New York was the epicenter of the two worst economic crises of the past century. The Great Depression—the longest, most widespread, and deepest depression ever recorded—started with the Wall Street crash of 1929 and rapidly spread to the rest of the world. That crash was preceded by an economic bubble that seemed to signal endless good times, but the bubble burst. Economists argue about the reasons for the crash, but F. Scott Fitzgerald points to the psychological heart of the problem in his essay "My Lost City" (1936):

I had discovered the crowning error of the city, its Pandora's box. Full of vaunting pride the New Yorker had climbed here and seen with dismay

what he had never suspected, that the city was not an endless succession of canyons that he had supposed but that it had *limits*—from the tallest structure he saw for the first time that it faded out into the country on all sides, into an expanse of green and blue that alone was limitless. And with the awful realization that New York was a city after all and not a universe, the whole shining edifice that he had reared in his imagination came crashing to the ground.<sup>75</sup>

*Beijing, early 2010. Daniel attends an informal dinner hosted by a friend. He is seated at a round table with employees of Goldman Sachs and members of the Chinese Communist Party. They compare notes. It turns out, to everyone's surprise, that the two organizations have a lot in common; perhaps they are the common characteristics of all successful organizations? They both have rigorous and meritocratic criteria for promotion, involving consultation at multiple levels (except for the very top levels; there, the criteria for promotion are more mysterious). They both recruit from the most elite pools of students. They both stress the organization's history within the ranks of the organization, and members of the organization are supposed to adhere to the organization's principles. They both emphasize widespread consultation within the organization before decisions are made. They both have a sense of the importance of serving the public (high-ranking employees of Goldman Sachs often end up working for the U.S. government; the company is sometimes referred to as "Government Sachs"). Somebody jokes that the two organizations have something else in common: they are both the most hated organizations in their respective countries.*

In Tom Wolfe's novel *Bonfire of the Vanities* (1987), Wall Street bond traders such as Sherman McCoy are the "Masters of the Universe," men for whom "there was . . . no limit whatsoever!"<sup>76</sup> In September 2008, Wall Street crashed again and nearly brought down the whole global financial system. The financiers of Wall Street "gamed and inflated the housing bubble, made out like bandits, and then left millions of households in ruins."<sup>77</sup> Even more worrying, the main actors on Wall Street themselves didn't completely understand the "financial weapons of mass destruction" at their disposal: "In some ways Wall Street was undone by its own smarts, as the very complexity of mortgage-backed securities meant that almost no one was able to figure out how to price them in a declining market." But there was no need to understand so long as people were making money. In the end, Andrew Ross Sorkin notes, "this drama is human one, a tale about the fallibility of people who thought they themselves were too big to fail." And the key lesson has not yet been learned: "Perhaps most disturbing of all, ego is still very much a central part of the Wall

Street machine. While the financial crisis destroyed careers and reputations, and left many more bruised and battered, it also left the survivors with a genuine sense of vulnerability at having made it back from the brink. Still missing in the current environment is a genuine sense of humility.<sup>78</sup> Perhaps God was right to halt construction of the tower.

Yet the history of New York shows that the city inevitably recovers from the depths of its economic, social, and moral crises. Towers are rebuilt and the city comes back to life in all its artificial glory. As Cynthia Ozick puts it, “New York will never leave town. It will never sink into a desert waste. Catapult us forward a thousand years, and we won’t recognize the place; yet it is certain to be, uninterruptedly, New York, populous, evolving, faithfully inconstant, magnetic, man-made, unnatural—the synthetic sublime.”<sup>79</sup> But how can that be? If New Yorkers really believe that they are masters of the universe, if it’s a community composed of extreme individualists with no sense of their limits, the city would have self-destructed a long time ago. The answer, of course, is that there are limits to New York-style ambition. It is limited by a sense of community.

#### COMMUNITY AND THE CITY

*Avner misses his family; he feels miserable in New York. He recalls Leonard Cohen’s words, apparently written while he was visiting Manhattan. Cohen describes how, late at night when he looks out at the buildings, he sees a face in every window looking back at him. He then writes, “And when I turn away, I wonder how many go back to their desks and write this down.”<sup>80</sup> Is he imagining it? If you look through your window in Manhattan, the last thing you are likely to see is somebody else looking at you. Cohen is imagining a community of lonely people longing for some comfort, since they all feel like strangers in their own town. He wonders how many do as he does, writing down such a poem. Perhaps they write a note to themselves, about others writing notes to themselves.*

Manhattan is the capital of people living alone: “Of all 3,141 counties in the United States, New York County is the unrivaled leader in single-individual households, at 50.6 percent. . . . [I]n Manhattan, 25.6 percent of households are married, whereas the national average is 49.7. . . . These numbers should tell an unambiguous story. They should confirm the common belief about our city, which is that New York is an isolating, cold-hearted kind of place.” Yet the common belief may be mistaken: “The picture of cities—and New York in particular—that has been emerging from the work of social scientists is that people living in them are actually less lonely. Rather than driving people apart, large population centers pull them together, and as a rule tend to possess greater com-

munity virtues than smaller ones. This, even though cities are consistently, overwhelmingly, places where people are more likely to live on their own.<sup>81</sup>

What explains this apparent paradox? How can people who live alone experience a greater sense of community? The answer is that loneliness isn't an objective state of affairs, like the fact of living alone. It's a subjective state, like whether we *feel* alone. Just as widows are more likely to feel better in a community with more widows than in a community with only a few single elderly women, so singles are more likely to feel better in a city with more singles, such as New York. Equally important, friends can sometimes substitute for family. Friendship increases the likelihood of subjective happiness, with benefits such as reducing health risks and prolonging life. Urban dwellers are more likely to have a substantial social network: the sociologist Claude Fischer found a 40 percent increase in the size of friendship-based social networks moving from semirural areas into the urban core.<sup>82</sup> In New York, the cheerful characters in *Friends* may be more typical than the Robert De Niro character in *Taxi Driver* who calls himself "God's lonely man" (though the latter makes for better art).

But too much community can be suffocating. People—especially ambitious people—also need some elbow room to develop their talents. New York attracts ambitious people because it has developed social norms that combine friendship with respect for privacy. The writer John Steinbeck is best known for novels that describe the people and landscape of California, but he chose to live in New York the last twenty-seven years of his life. He explains the attractions of the city:

I live in a small house on the East Side in the Seventies. It has a pretty little south garden. My neighborhood is my village. I know all the storekeepers and some of the neighbors. Sometimes I don't go out of my village for weeks at a time. It has every quality of a village except nosiness. No one interferes with our business—no one by chance visits us without first telephoning, certainly a most civilized practice. When we close the front door, the city and the world are shut out and we are more private than any country below the Arctic Circle has ever been. We have many friends—good friends in the city. Sometimes we don't see them for six or eight months and this in no way interferes with our friendship. Any place else this would be treated as neglect.<sup>83</sup>

It's understandable why people who live in New York love it, but it's also understandable why visitors without social networks can feel lonely there.

*While Bing was hard at work at New York University law school, Daniel had a term off. Every morning, he would put baby Julien in a stroller and they would*

walk around Greenwich Village. Julien seemed to enjoy the frequent change of scenery, the new colors and smells. They would stop at Washington Square to observe the strange cast of characters, the fire-throwers, musicians, acrobats, comedians, whoever happened to be performing that day. At night, Daniel enjoyed taking walks with his friend Fawaz and being teased by an Italian waitress at a neighborhood café. He also developed a friendship with Cy, the doorman at their dorm. But it couldn't last. Daniel knew he was heading to Hong Kong, and he would brag that he could predict the performance of the Hong Kong stock market by observing the World Trade Center at night. If many lights were left on, it meant a busy trading day in Hong Kong. He confessed, however, that it was harder to predict whether the market would go up or down.

Like her Greenwich Village neighbors, Jane Jacobs loved Washington Square Park: "Throughout the early 1950s, she brought her sons to the play areas or strolled around with them under the dappled canopy of trees. . . . It needed no dressing up, as it was a place steeped in history. . . . But most of all, Washington Square Park was a place to be outside and to run around green grass and trees, in the middle of a city that could feel very paved and gray."<sup>84</sup> But one man, Robert Moses, was threatening it all. He proposed to run a highway through the center of Washington Square. Jacobs mobilized her neighbors and influential intellectuals to lead the struggle to save the park. The *Village Voice* editorialized: "It is our view that any serious tampering with Washington Square Park will mark the beginning of the end of Greenwich Village as a community. Greenwich Village will become another characterless place. . . . Washington Square Park is a symbol of unity in diversity."<sup>85</sup> The New York secretary of state Carmine de Sapio was eventually brought on board, and Moses realized that he had been checkmated by "a bunch of mothers."<sup>86</sup>

Meanwhile, Jacobs was composing *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Throughout the writing process, she gazed out the window at 555 Hudson Street for inspiration from the "sidewalk ballet" of her Greenwich Village neighborhood. Jacobs drew on her observations to defend the view that successful neighborhoods are characterized by diversity. Four conditions, Jacobs argued, are necessary for diversity: a street or district should have mixed primary uses (residential, commercial, and entertainment, all jumbled up in close proximity); short blocks designed to make the pedestrian feel more comfortable; a mixture of ages and types of buildings; and a dense population.<sup>87</sup> Older neighborhoods often have such features; hence, they should be preserved and renovated rather than razed and replaced. The book was published in 1961 and went on to become the single most influential work in the history of urban planning. Ironically, however, Jacobs may have been too successful for her neighborhood's own good: the West Village neighborhood Jacobs helped save by blocking its design-

nation as a slum recently had its zip code cited in *Forbes* magazine as the most expensive in Manhattan.<sup>88</sup>

Jacobs's recommendations may help to preserve and nourish the bonds that tie us to our neighborhood, but they seem limited if the concern is the health of the city as a whole. How can we promote civicism, a love of the city? After all, New Yorkers are supposed to love New York, not just Greenwich Village. As a matter of fact, they probably do identify more with the city than with their neighborhoods. How did that come about? No doubt Moses's bridges and tunnels helped to bring about a sense of civic unity. But a strong sense of civicism can be created only by public spaces where different kinds of people from different neighborhoods interact and develop a sense of common concern for the city as a whole.

*Chicago, August 2002. Daniel and Julien attend a baseball game between the Chicago White Sox and the hated New York Yankees. It's a tight playoff race and the fans are cheering wildly for the local team. Between innings, Daniel talks to the elderly man from Chicago sitting next to him. He is a World War II veteran who fought in the Pacific theater. Daniel tells him about Hong Kong now. Then the man reveals a secret that he hasn't told even his own family members: although he claps for the White Sox, he is inwardly cheering for the Yankees. But why? Daniel asks. The man explains that he saw Babe Ruth play for the Yankees as a kid and has been hooked ever since.*

According to Kenneth T. Jackson and David S. Dunbar, "the New York Yankees have always functioned somewhat like a barometer of the state of their city. When things are looking up for the city—the Roaring Twenties, the postwar years of boom and expansion between 1949 and 1962, or the low-crime renaissance of 1996–2000—the Yankees respond with a string of world championships. But when the city is facing the abyss of social dissolution, financial bankruptcy, and high crime—1969, 1973, and 1990—the Yankees find themselves stuck in the cellar."<sup>89</sup> But maybe the Yankees do not function simply as a barometer of the state of their city. Yankee pride contributes to and reinforces pride in New York City. There's nothing like a victory parade for a successful sports team to break down barriers of class, race, sex, language, or neighborhood and to shift the focus from the self to the city.

*Baby Julien wants to take a horse carriage ride around Central Park. Daniel is reluctant, but Bing says why not; it would be fun for Julien. Daniel goes along, but it doesn't feel right. High up in his horse carriage, he feels like an aristocrat looking down on the hoi polloi.*

The idea of a public space that unites New Yorkers of all types goes back to the mid-nineteenth century. The grid system's major flaw is that it did not make plans for a public park. For the city's wealthiest citizens, it didn't really matter: they could go for a stroll in Washington Square (a gathering place for the social elite in the nineteenth century). Other New Yorkers had to go cemeteries to commune with nature.<sup>90</sup> In 1844, the celebrated journalist William Cullen Bryant penned an editorial calling for a new public park for the "vast population," including the newly arrived immigrants. Thirteen years later, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux won a contest to design the largest and most expensive public park ever built. Olmsted's earlier writings had expressed admiration for a park in England where "the privileges of the garden were enjoyed equally by all classes. There were some who were attended by servants, and sent at once for their carriages, but a large proportion were of the common ranks, and a few women with children, or suffering from ill health, were evidently the wives of very humble laborers."<sup>91</sup> So he designed a massive public green space where "the rich and the poor, the cultivated and well bred and the sturdy and self-made shall be attracted together and encouraged to assimilate."<sup>92</sup> Central Park opened in 1858 and became an instant success, attracting millions of diverse visitors, who would mix and take pride in the park and the city as a whole.

Does civicism matter in practice? one might ask. In ordinary times, perhaps not. But New Yorkers have expressed their civicism when the city needed it most. In 1911, a fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory claimed the lives of 146 immigrant women, mainly Jewish and Italian, in the greatest industrial disaster in New York's history. On the ninth floor, just above where the fire started, owners had locked the exit door in order to increase productivity. A few days later, in a heavy rain, more than a half million New Yorkers marched in and watched a mass funeral procession. The fire galvanized disparate groups to petition the state government and led to the formation of a Factory Investigating Commission, which made sixty recommendations covering all industrial conditions. Fifty-six of them were adopted, including strict fire codes, a limit to the workweek, and the establishment of a board empowered to issue regulations that had the force of law.<sup>93</sup> It may seem like a stretch to credit Central Park with such outcomes, but the park may have played a role in creating the idea of a unified city with common concerns that transcend class boundaries. Or let's put it this way: had the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire taken place in the early nineteenth century, would diverse social forces have been galvanized to the same extent?

More civicism emerged during World War II. As a service to those on leave, the American Theatre Wing opened the Stage Door Canteen in the basement of a theater on Forty-fourth Street in 1942. "Here enlisted men—no officers allowed—could eat, see a show, and dance, often with celebrities. Lauren Ba-



call volunteered on Monday nights, often spending the entire evening dancing; Broadway stars Katharine Cornell and Helen Hayes bussed tables; Alfred Hunt even took out the garbage. Onstage, everyone from Benny Goodman to Ethel Merman performed, and on an average over 2,000 GIs passed through the door."<sup>94</sup> The club closed when the Japanese surrendered in 1945, and New York could resume its normal role as the city of individualistic ambition "where you go to seize the day, to leave your mark, to live within the nerve of your generation."<sup>95</sup>

*Hong Kong, September 11, 2001. It's late at night. Bing and Julien have gone to sleep. Daniel switches on the television. Oh no, it looks like a disaster movie, like The Towering Inferno. Boring. He switches to another channel. The same movie: what a coincidence! Another channel, same movie again! This time, Daniel realizes that he is not watching a movie. The World Trade Center has been attacked and the two towers have collapsed, with thousands killed, including more than four hundred firefighters, police officers, and other rescue workers. It's far more horrifying than any movie he could have imagined.*

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, civicism reemerged in its strongest form yet: "The rancorous racial tension in New York was sharply reduced. Communities that formerly defined themselves in terms of their conflicts with the police were able to feel a common sense of civic identity. The city's firemen are heroes in the eyes of everyone."<sup>96</sup> Mayor Giuliani, formerly viewed as a combative, moralistic, and deeply partisan figure, transformed himself into a resolute and compassionate leader who was spontaneously applauded when he walked down the street. For John P. Avlon, Mayor Giuliani's chief speechwriter,

the greatest inspiration came from the deep grief of ordinary New Yorkers: makeshift memorials of notes and melting candles in parks outside firehouses; the American flags that hung from almost every apartment building; the steadfast souls who stood along the West Side Highway every hour of the day and night for more than a month, holding handwritten signs and cheering the rescue workers on their way to and from ground zero. . . . Most startling and beautiful was this: along the walls of the church [St. Paul's Chapel], posted on pillars and taped in pews, were letters and cards written by children from across the United States, covered with brightly colored drawings of eagles, firemen, the towers under attack, and American flags. They bore messages of hope, faith, and gratitude: "Thank you . . . you are my heroes. . . . I am sorry the

people died . . . thank you for saving the people. . . I love the city. . .  
 God Bless America."<sup>97</sup>

*Summer 2003. Daniel and his sister Valérie climb up Mount Pinnacle on the border between Canada and the United States. They are carrying their father's ashes. He was born in the United States and spent most of his life in Canada, and he had asked that his ashes be scattered on the border between the two countries. Daniel and Valérie improvise a ceremony. This place looks like the border. They open a bottle of rum, add a bit of Coke, and drink a toast in his honor. The ashes are taken by the wind into, they hope, the two countries. But now Daniel wonders. His father was the least nationalistic person he had ever met; why would he want his ashes to be scattered on the border between countries? He loved New York and Montreal; why not scatter his ashes in those two cities? Oh, yes, perhaps some ashes in Paris as well. Nationalism has become so deeply rooted in our psychological makeup that it seems hard to think outside the box, even for Daniel's father.*

God bless America?  
 God bless New York.

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## NOTES

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### INTRODUCTION

1. The American philosopher Leo Strauss suggested that Athens and Jerusalem serve as models or symbols of two traditions in Western civilization. Athens represents reason, whereas Jerusalem represents biblical revelation. Strauss, “Jerusalem and Athens: Some Preliminary Reflections,” in *Jerusalem and Athens: Reason and Revelation in the Works of Leo Strauss*, ed. Susan Orr (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995).

2. W.J.F. Jenner, “Linzi and Other Cities of Warring States China,” in *The Great Cities in History*, ed. John Julius Norwich (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 48–49.

3. In the twenty-first century, more than nineteen cities will have more than twenty million people; see [www.192021.org](http://www.192021.org). By 2025, China alone is expected to have fifteen supercities with an average population of twenty-five million each ([www.mckinsey.com/mgi/publications/china\\_urban\\_summary\\_of\\_findings.asp](http://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/publications/china_urban_summary_of_findings.asp)).

Today, more than half the world’s population lives in cities (compared to less than 3 percent in 1800). How do we define a city? For our purposes, a city is a social entity with at least one hundred thousand people, a definition shared by countries as diverse as Iceland and China.

4. To be even more specific, we mean that the ethos is shared in the sense that the city’s inhabitants generally believe that the city expresses a particular dominant set of values, but not everybody necessarily agrees with those values and outlooks. More controversially, we will argue that those who do not share those values and outlooks still have an obligation to respect them (so long as the values do not violate basic rights).

5. David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

6. According to David Owen, densely populated cities like New York and Hong Kong that promote walking are even “greener” than less populated rural areas because a higher percentage of their inhabitants walk, bike, and use mass transit rather than drive, people live in smaller spaces and use less energy to heat their homes, and they are unlikely to accumulate a lot of large, energy-sucking appliances. Owen, *Green Metropolis: Why Living Smaller, Living Closer, and Driving Less Are the Keys to Sustainability* (New York: Riverhead, 2009). See also Edward Glaeser, *The Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier* (London: Pan MacMillan, 2011).

7. See Alain de Botton, *The Architecture of Happiness* (New York: Vintage, 2006), 229–30.

8. Charles Landry, *The Creative City* (London: Earthscan, 2008). In addition, architecture can have an indirect effect on values via mood change. For example, an ugly

city can make one depressed and hence pessimistic about human beings and their potential to achieve good things in life.

9. Perhaps another book could be written about neighborhood pride (one can think of cities like Tokyo, where neighborhoods—or boroughs in London—do play a key role in terms of pride and identity). In our view, however, pride in the neighborhood is typically not as powerful an emotion as pride in one's city, particularly these days. (In Beijing, it used to be said that peoples' accents could reveal what neighborhood they were from; but Beijing accents are getting more uniform as Beijingers move more within the city.) And from a normative point of view, we believe that neighborhoods tend to be more closed and homogenous, and hence less morally defensible, than diverse and open cities.

10. In Italian, the word *campanilismo* refers to subnational forms of patriotism (the French expression *esprit de clocher* is similar). However, it is different from our idea of civicism in that *campanilismo* is pejorative: it connotes insularity, chauvinism, and parochialism, whereas *civicism* is meant to carry a positive connotation so long as the city's ethos does not justify the violation of basic human rights.

11. Focus on the "city" may still be too abstract to capture all or most of the relevant details of social life within that entity, but we cannot avoid the trade-off between accuracy and social relevance. Flying too high means missing too many details, but digging too low means missing social trends that may be of greater interest and relevance.

12. It has been suggested to us that we should have another agenda: using attachments to cities to counter nationalism. But we do not mean to oppose all forms of nationalism: we support nationalism when it helps to bring peace and security to a country and when it motivates the rich and powerful to care for the others. We do hope that civicism can counter reactionary forms of nationalism. If people have strong attachments to cities, they are less likely to develop exclusivist and chauvinist attachment to the nation, with the exception of attachment to city-states such as Singapore or cities like Jerusalem and Beijing that are often (mis)taken as symbols of the nation.

13. Todd Woody and Clifford Krauss, "Cities Prepare for Life with the Electric Car," *New York Times*, 15 February 2010.

14. For other examples, see Stephen Moore, *Alternative Routes to the Sustainable City: Austin, Curitiba, and Frankfurt* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007).

15. See [www.cui-zy.cn/Recommended/Chongqing/cui重庆模式.doc](http://www.cui-zy.cn/Recommended/Chongqing/cui重庆模式.doc).

16. Cities can also create political headaches for states: for example, the city of Paris's public support for the Dalai Lama undermined the French government's efforts to mend ties with China (see the chapter on Paris).

17. See [www.ted.com/talks/paul\\_romer.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/paul_romer.html).

18. Parag Khanna argues that global cities, like the largely autonomous cities in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance periods that often drove innovation in Europe, will increasingly drive economic, political, and diplomatic innovation in the future world order. Khanna, *How to Run the World: Charting a Course to the Next Renaissance* (New York: Random House, 2011).

19. Hence, we do not seek to rank cities according to "our" scale of values (once cities

have passed a minimal human rights threshold). Here we differ from surveys such as the Anholt City Brands Index, which seeks to rank cities according to contestable values such as “the friendliness and safety of each city,” and the new World City Index devised by the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, which ranks cities according to measures such as “the number of academic papers published in international core periodicals.”

20. We do not mean to imply that there is *no* reason to criticize economic inequality in Hong Kong; many social critics do just that. But the standard they use will not be as egalitarian as the standard in, say, Tokyo, perhaps because the standard used intuitively implies some kind of respect for the pride that the locals feel in the city’s ethos.

21. Jacob T. Levy cites the example of a group of Orthodox Jewish men in Montreal who ask a gym near their neighborhood to cover its windows so that they would not risk seeing women exercising in skimpy workout clothes (Levy, “Multicultural Manners,” 12 May 2009, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1403687>). Levy offers several reasons that their request should be denied, but we offer another key reason: Montreal’s ethos is not an ethos of religion. In Jerusalem, where religion is the dominant ethos, such a request would not be seen as far-fetched.

22. To be fair, part of McDonald’s success is that it often adapts its “cuisine” to particular cultures, such as serving curry and vegetarian “hamburgers” in India and poutine in Quebec. Also, many of the world’s finest five-star hotels do incorporate architectural characteristics from the local culture.

23. Perhaps there is also something unfair about stretching one’s commitments too thin: Daniel worries that he has free-riden on the ethos of several cities without doing sufficient work to maintain them. For him, this book is a kind of “repayment” of thanks to the various urban communities that have sustained him.

24. Kwame Anthony Appiah’s ideal of rooted cosmopolitanism is similar to ours. Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005). Appiah aims to combine the often-clashing ideals of universal obligation and particularistic attachment via a long philosophical and personal journey. We offer another way to do it: through building urban identities that are dynamic and open.

25. Readers may find that at various points the chapters veer from accounts of cities into reflections touched off by our encounters with those cities. Our goal is to show how cities inspire us to think about politics no less than states do. We want to show that if you are in Montreal, it is inescapable to think about language and politics, and if you are in Jerusalem, it is unavoidable to think about religion and politics. In our view, it is not a coincidence that rich debates on language and multiculturalism emerged from Montreal, that rich debates on religion emerged from Jerusalem, and that theoretical challenges to the “bourgeois” way of life emerged from Paris. The ethos of those cities actually provide rich resources for reflections on themes in political theory that have implications for political thinking and practice outside of those cities.

26. In other words, we chose cities that we know from personal experience as well as cities with a pronounced ethos. As it turns out, the cities we have experienced also tend to have pronounced ethos. It’s a matter partly of luck—we were born and bred in two cities with pronounced ethos (Avner in Jerusalem, Daniel in Montreal)—and partly of

choice, meaning that we were attracted to cities with a pronounced ethos later on, though we hadn't theorized about our choices prior to writing this book.

27. One exception is the study carried out to determine Changsha's "spirit" (*jingshen*). Changsha is a city in central China that is famed for its spicy cuisine and hot-blooded personalities. Residents were asked to choose between several ideals meant to express the spirit of the city, and most votes were given to "do things in a firm way, be warm-hearted; have the personality of a chili pepper and the spirit of a mule." See Gu Qingfeng, *Changsha de chuanshuo* [*The Story of Changsha*] (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 2009), 80–81.

28. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

29. In a similar vein, the French social scientist Michel de Certeau argues that the person who walks in the city with no particular aim can defy the "strategies" imposed by planners and institutions and thus is more likely to experience the city in authentic ways. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

30. Ideally, the aims of alleviating poverty and promoting an ethos could be combined. For example, the city of Qufu (Confucius's hometown) draws on its ethos of Confucianism to attract cultural tourists who can pump money into the local economy. Contrary to cultural purists who might object to the "commercialization" of such endeavors, we believe that spending scarce resources on promoting the ethos of a relatively poor city is *more* justifiable if it can be combined with the aim of economic development.

31. Note that city-based sporting rivalries need not be confined to cities within one country: for example, there is a long history of rivalry between the Barcelona and AC Milan soccer teams. But it is highly unlikely that such rivalries will erupt in warfare because the city-based attachments are not shared by other cities in the respective countries (in contrast, nation-based sporting rivalries can sometimes lead to warfare, as in the case of the 1969 "Soccer War" between El Salvador and Honduras [<http://libcom.org/library/soccer-war-1969-el-salvador-honduras-kapuscinski>]).

32. See Gerald E. Frug, *City Making: Building Communities without Building Walls* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 4–5. American cities do, however, have the power to implement development codes, and differences in that respect can produce different economic effects. Cities with fairly strict building codes, such as San Francisco and Portland, have tried to limit sprawl and consequently were hit less hard by the post-2008 housing slump as compared to less-regulated cities such as Las Vegas and Phoenix (Timothy Egan, "Slumburbia," Opinionator Blog, *New York Times*, 10 February 2010).

33. See Poul Erik Tojner, Ole Thyssen, Kasper Guldager, and Wilfried Wang, *Green Architecture for the Future* (Copenhagen: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 2009), 46–55.

34. Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 230–34.

35. This is not to say that branding campaigns must tell the whole truth, particularly if problematic associations undermine the ethos being promoted. One example "can be

seen in the marketing of the Israeli city of Eilat, which during the 1990s was presented in Europe as 'Eilat on the Red Sea.' The campaign did not mention the fact that the city was located in Israel, which was perceived at that time as unsafe for tourists due to security issues." Eli Avraham, "Media Strategies for Improving an Unfavorable City Image," *Cities* 21, no. 6 (December 2004): 477.

36. Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. William Weaver (Orlando, FL: Harvest, 1974).

37. For a gripping account of characters from different walks of life in Bombay, see Suketu Mehta, *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found* (New York: Vintage, 2004). Several of the main characters from the book (literally) come together only in the section on film.

38. But please don't forget to fight to maintain the cultural particularities of your own cities.

### JERUSALEM

1. Jews around the world are divided mainly into secular and religious. The latter are divided to several groups. The ultra-Orthodox are very conservative; in Jerusalem this very large community lives in their own neighborhoods, the men often do not work but instead devote themselves to religious studies, whereas the women work outside the home. The modern Orthodox are also religious believers but they adjust to modern times, are more involved in the economy and in everyday life, and mix with secular people more easily. The other two big groups are the Conservatives, who are less strict in their religious beliefs and norms, and the Reforms, who have gone a long way in their interpretation of religion and their adaptation to modern and secular society.

2. In this chapter I sometimes mention Arabs, sometimes Palestinians. *Arabs* is a more general term, of course, encompassing Jordanians, Egyptians, Syrians, and so on. Not all Arabs are Palestinians. The picture is more complicated, however, because some Palestinians are Israeli citizens, whereas most Palestinians who reside in East Jerusalem do not consider themselves to be Israeli citizens.

3. Perhaps I ought to explain. Some readers might take *secular* to denote lacking any faith, whereas I use the term here to include those who believe in God but do not accept institutionalized religion or do not wish to belong to such an institution.

4. Yehuda Amichai, "Suicide Attempts of Jerusalem," translated by Harold Schimmel, in Amichai, *Poems of Jerusalem: A Bilingual Edition* (Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing, 1987), 35.

5. Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, chapter 53 ([www.mtwain.com/Innocents\\_Abroad/](http://www.mtwain.com/Innocents_Abroad/)).

6. Whether indeed Jerusalem is the place the Quran refers to remains open; what is written in the Quran is that Allah moved Muhammad from one mosque to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, meaning "the farthest." I think of a paper I read by Sari Nusseibeh, the president of Al-Quds University, a Palestinian university in Jerusalem. A leading activist and politician, respected by both Palestinians and Israelis, Nusseibeh is a great believer in educa-



tion and its role in bridging the gaps and the profound distrust between the two nations. In this paper he tries to convince not only Jerusalemites but also the Muslims themselves that Jerusalem is no less holy to Muslims than Mecca or Medina, the two holy cities in Saudi Arabia. Sari Nusseibeh, "On Jerusalem," in *Jerusalem: Religious Aspects*, ed. Mahdi Abdul Hadi (Jerusalem: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, 1995), 13–23.

7. K.A.C. Creswell, *The Origin of the Plan of the Dome of the Rock* (London: British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, 1924).

8. David Kroyanker, *Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1996), 142 (in Hebrew).

9. Gadi Wexler, "What Has King George to Do with King David?" in *Pathways in Jerusalem*, ed. Meron Eyal (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 1996), 278 (in Hebrew). The description of the YMCA building is based on this essay.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Rehav Rubin, *Image and Reality: Jerusalem in Maps and Views* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1999), 13–14.

12. *Ibid.*, 34.

13. Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, chapter 52.

14. In Arabic, meaning requesting a present, a special donation.

15. Eitan Bar Yosef, *The Holy Land in English Culture, 1799–1917: Palestine and the Question of Orientalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

16. Ze'ev Aner, *Stories of Buildings* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Defense Publications, 1988), 37 (in Hebrew).

17. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priestly\\_Blessing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priestly_Blessing).

18. Watch the videos: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=VN9lkI5ZaOM&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VN9lkI5ZaOM&feature=related); or [http://wejew.com/media/2867/Birkat\\_Kohanim\\_Kotel\\_Mass\\_Blessing/](http://wejew.com/media/2867/Birkat_Kohanim_Kotel_Mass_Blessing/).

19. *Zion* is another name for Jerusalem (hence Zionism, the Jewish national movement, is the longing for Jerusalem).

20. *The Memoirs of Sir Ronald Storrs* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1937), 438.

21. *Haaretz*, 4 February 2010.

22. [www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1128058.html](http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1128058.html).

23. Unpleasant scenes on this video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHE9usA8uBQ&feature=youtube\\_gdata](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHE9usA8uBQ&feature=youtube_gdata).

24. Bernard Sabella, "Jerusalem: A Christian Perspective," in *Jerusalem: Religious Aspects*, 36.

25. Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, chapter 53.

26. The Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles is a great success, with a quarter million visitors annually. See [www.museumoftolerance.com/site/c.tmL6KfNVLtH/b.4865925/k.83A7/Whats\\_Happening\\_at\\_the\\_MOT.htm](http://www.museumoftolerance.com/site/c.tmL6KfNVLtH/b.4865925/k.83A7/Whats_Happening_at_the_MOT.htm).

27. For a critique of Christian Zionism, including its political implications, particularly for the Israeli-Arab conflict, see <http://stephensizer.blogspot.com/2008/10/dr-peter-walker-on-christian-zionism.html>.

28. [www.nytimes.com/2010/03/16/world/middleeast/16jerusalem.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/16/world/middleeast/16jerusalem.html).

29. Although apparently the origin of the name is Italian, *Pasquino*, the name of a person who wrote and hung announcements in Rome. Menachem Friedman, “*Pashkvilim* in Ultra-Orthodox Society,” [www.biu.ac.il/SOC/so/Haredi\\_Pashqevil1.pdf](http://www.biu.ac.il/SOC/so/Haredi_Pashqevil1.pdf) (in Hebrew).

30. According to Josephus, an important historian of the time, Herod feared that John’s moral and religious influence might spark a rebellion. See Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, <http://old.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=J.+AJ+18.118>.

31. I thank Orly Peled for mentioning this to me.

32. Heinrich Heine, “Atta Troll,” [www.archive.org/stream/attatrollfromger00heiniala/attatrollfromger00heiniala\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/attatrollfromger00heiniala/attatrollfromger00heiniala_djvu.txt).

33. [www.sacred-destinations.com/israel/jerusalem-last-supper-room](http://www.sacred-destinations.com/israel/jerusalem-last-supper-room). The detailed account of how this church was repeatedly destroyed and reconstructed comes from this essay.

34. Christians also believe that when the Messiah comes this is where the resurrected will enter the city. They base this on their interpretation of the book of Zachariah, chapter 14.

35. Pesikta Rabbati, 31 (in Hebrew).

36. Zeev Vilnai, *Jerusalem: The Old City and Its Surroundings* (Jerusalem: Achiezer, 1970), 320 (in Hebrew).

37. Yehuda Atzba, ed., *Two Hundred Jerusalem Stories* (Jerusalem: Mevasseret Tzion, Tzivonim, 2007), 153 (in Hebrew). I found no corroboration for this story in *The Memoirs of Sir Ronald Storrs* (see 421–22), though he does refer at length to the “troubles,” meaning the 1929 clashes between Muslims and Jews in Jerusalem and elsewhere in Palestine.

38. Atzba, *Two Hundred Jerusalem Stories*, 153.

39. *Ibid.*, 79.

40. Atzba, *Two Hundred Jerusalem Stories*, 114. The words in Hebrew, *Kesher La’echad*, have a double meaning: “connections to the one,” as well as “tie of unity.” The latter is a Catholic concept, meaning unity in the world, often referring to God, humans, and the angels. It therefore has a deep spiritual meaning. This woman is mentioned also in an essay by Avishai Margalit, a prominent Israeli philosopher, who was born and raised in Jerusalem. He tells me he remembers her from his childhood. She used to walk in the streets preaching for ties of unity among people.

41. <http://savvytraveler.publicradio.org/show/features/2000/20000603/jerusalem.shtml>.

42. [http://duns100.dundb.co.il/ts.cgi?tsscript=press\\_show&cat\\_id=22](http://duns100.dundb.co.il/ts.cgi?tsscript=press_show&cat_id=22).

43. [www.cbs.gov.il/shnaton60/st05\\_09.pdf](http://www.cbs.gov.il/shnaton60/st05_09.pdf).

44. [www.cbs.gov.il/shnaton60/st05\\_09.pdf](http://www.cbs.gov.il/shnaton60/st05_09.pdf).

45. <http://archrecord.construction.com/news/daily/archives/080505calatrava.asp>.

46. [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/10/AR2008071002710.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/10/AR2008071002710.html).

47. [http://jiis-jerusalem.blogspot.com/2009\\_07\\_01\\_archive.html](http://jiis-jerusalem.blogspot.com/2009_07_01_archive.html).

48. Avishai Margalit, "The Myth of Jerusalem," *New York Review of Books*, 19 December 1991. The legendary mayor of Jerusalem at that time, Teddy Kolek, replied in the *New York Review of Books* of 5 March 1992.

49. 1 Kings 3:16–27.

50. Politically, I think that the ideal solution for Jerusalem is not to divide the city in two (with one part for the Israelis and the other for the Palestinians) or for either nation to govern it. Rather, I believe that the ideal solution is for Jerusalem to remain whole and enjoy a special status with the two states: the Israeli state and the Palestinian state, once it is established. This is a tricky solution involving a complicated bureaucracy.

## MONTREAL

1. Marcel Trudel, *Mythes et réalités dans l'histoire du Québec: La suite* (Montreal: Bibliothèque Québécoise, 2008), chap. 1. This section draws on Trudel's book.

2. Quoted in Sherry Simon, *Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City* (Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2006), 4.

3. Trudel, *Mythes et réalités dans l'histoire du Québec*, chap. 13.

4. Marc V. Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal: Language Policy and Social Change in a Bilingual City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 8. The next four paragraphs draw on Levine's book.

5. Quoted in *ibid.*, 14.

6. *Ibid.*, 7.

7. [www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ART0002473](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ART0002473).

8. British liberals at the time were motivated more by contempt for "backward" peoples than an aversion to French culture per se; see, e.g., J. S. Mill, *Representative Government* (orig. pub. 1861), in *Three Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 385.

9. Trudel, *Mythes et réalités dans l'histoire du Québec*, chap. 8.

10. Michel Plourde and Pierre Georgeault, eds., *Le français au Québec: 400 ans d'histoire et de vie* (Québec: FIDES, 2008), 189.

11. Quoted from Trudel, *Mythes et réalités dans l'histoire du Québec*, 226, 232 (all translation by Daniel Bell unless indicated otherwise).

12. *Ibid.*, 232–33. Religious education at the time also inculcated a rigidly puritanical sexual morality: Marcel Trudel recalls that one of his cousins was refused the Host at Mass in the 1940s because her dress did not cover her elbows (Trudel, *Mythes et réalités dans l'histoire du Québec*, 136–37).

13. The last visible symbol of "old Quebec" in Montreal, arguably, was the Place Ville-Marie building (1962) in downtown Montreal designed (by I. M. Pei) in the shape of a cross.

14. Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal*, 43. This section draws on Levine's book.

15. W. P. Percival, *The Lure of Montreal* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1964), n.p. (introduction).

16. Simon, *Translating Montreal*, 34.

17. In 1967, Montreal city planners envisioned that the metro system would quadruple in size by 1982, but hardly any of their plans came to fruition. Eric Trudel, *Montréal, ville d'avant-garde?* (Montreal: Lanctôt Éditeur, 2006), 8–9.

18. Francois Remillard and Brian Merrett, *Montreal Architecture: A Guide to Styles and Buildings* (Sainte-Adèle: Éditions Café Crème, 2007), 200.

19. The push to make Montreal into a world-class city was led by the ambitious (megalomaniac, to his critics) Francophone mayor of the city Jean Drapeau. Paul-André Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération* (Montreal: Boréal, 2000), 539.

20. Quoted in Joseph Yvon Thériault, “La langue, symbole de l’identité québécoise,” in *Le français au Québec*, 323.

21. Mordecai Richler, *Home Sweet Home: My Canadian Album* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984), 143.

22. Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal*, 109.

23. On the radically different accounts of Quebec history in Anglophone and Francophone textbooks, see Trudel, *Mythes et réalités dans l’histoire du Québec*, chap. 6. A more balanced account was published only in the 1960s, in the bilingual multivolume *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, jointly authored by a team of Anglophone and Francophone authors working in constant collaboration (*ibid.*, 110–11). This work has recently been posted online: [www.biographi.ca/](http://www.biographi.ca/).

24. Milton J. Esman draws on the Quebec case (and two other examples) to argue that the conditions for redressing an unfavorable and invidious ethnic division of labor without resorting to expropriation and massive economic disruption are the following: “(1) a demographic majority, (2) economic subordination, (3) political opportunity permitting the majority to gain control of the state, (4) nationalist ideology, and (5) unoccupied fiscal space.” Esman, “Ethnic Politics and Economic Power,” *Journal of Comparative Politics* 19, no. 4 (July 1987): 416.

25. Quoted in Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal*, 113.

26. Quoted in *ibid.*, 114.

27. Quoted in *ibid.*, 175.

28. Quoted in *ibid.*, 111.

29. See Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération*, 430–33.

30. Richler, *Home Sweet Home*, 264.

31. Simon, *Translating Montreal*, 14

32. *Ibid.*, 91.

33. Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), esp. chap. 2. One of the unintended intellectual benefits of the language wars is that they spawned a rich debate on multiculturalism and language rights by influential Canadian philosophers such as Will Kymlicka, Charles Taylor, Daniel Weinstock, and Alan Patten. Part of the reason it took so long for people to recognize the centrality of linguistic conflict to normative debates in political theory, as Kymlicka and Patten note, is that linguistic conflict did not affect the day-to-day lives of the four Western countries that have been most influential in setting the postwar intellectual agenda. The United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany effectively had monolingual public

institutions for a century or more, and hence scholars from those countries often wrote as if one could take for granted that people in a political community share a common language. Kymlicka and Patten, "Introduction," in *Language Rights and Political Theory*, ed. Will Kymlicka and Alan Patten (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6–7. Conversely, scholars from Canada often theorized on the assumption that linguistic conflict was a common state of affairs, and their theories were inspired to an important extent by the discourse on language and multiculturalism in Montreal/Quebec/Canada.

34. In some cases, however, it was not a matter of choice: at that time, non-Catholic Francophones could not send their children to French-language public schools.

35. Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal*, 62; Alain-G. Gagnon, "La diversité québécoise," in *Le français au Québec*, 418.

36. Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal*, 141.

37. *Ibid.*, 142.

38. Parizeau's claim, allegedly made after a few drinks, may not have been off-target from a social-scientific point of view, but it seemed to suggest that he still clung to an ideal of a linguistically unified, racially homogenous ethnic-based concept of nationhood. Parizeau resigned as PQ leader and Quebec premier the next day. He was replaced as premier by Lucien Bouchard, who went out of his way to affirm the importance of multiculturalism in Montreal. In 1996, he addressed the Anglophone community: "It goes without saying that diversity is a plus. . . . It's part of the soul . . . of Montreal. . . . What makes Montreal special is the mixture of Francophones, Anglophones, and other peoples who share the streets in ways as friendly as anywhere else in the world; if we lost this mixture, we wouldn't be the same city" (quoted in Gretta Chambers, "Les relations entre anglophones et francophones," in *Le français au Québec*, 392).

39. Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal*, 218.

40. Simon, *Translating Montreal*, 111.

41. *Ibid.*, 106–8.

42. Chambers, "Les relations entre francophones et anglophones," 395.

43. Gagnon, "La diversité québécoise," 420; Richler, *Home Sweet Home*, 37.

44. Jim Hynes, *Montreal Book of Everything* (Lunenburg: MacIntyre Purcell Publishing, 2007), 30.

45. Simon, *Translating Montreal*, 11. Drawing on the work of Lohar Baier, Simon contrasts Montreal's moral progress (without using such terminology) with the monolingualism of Middle European cities such as Prague and Trieste that were similarly "colonized" by a historically privileged language community (German): "The plurilingualism of this region was suppressed by war and genocide and is today replaced by a desolate monolingualism" (27).

46. In my original draft, I had written that Le Plateau was located in the "far east" part of the city. G. A. Cohen, formerly the Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory at Oxford University, corrected my mistake: "The Plateau can seem to be in the far east of the city only to a semi-goy NDGer. Much of it is west of St. Lawrence, and none is *far* east." I am particularly grateful for Cohen's detailed comments on an earlier draft. I first met Cohen—Jerry, as he preferred to be called—as a graduate student in

1986. He was ill, but rather than cancel the tutorial he invited me (and another student) to his home in London for discussion. Jerry opened the tutorial by sharing memories of Montreal, and it turns out he lived for many years in the same apartment building as my father. I became enchanted with Cohen's intelligence and humor, and I was honored that he spent time with me in Montreal (including an Expos' baseball game; he was one of the few adults who laughed at the antics of the mascot Youpi). We lost touch over the years, but I sent him a draft of this chapter. He responded with an email saying that he was very busy but would try to read it within a few weeks. As it turns out, he wrote detailed comments the next day. To my shock and profound sadness, he died of a massive heart attack several days later.

47. The relatively happy "dénouement" of the linguistic conflicts in Montreal may be more difficult to achieve in cities like Jerusalem where the conflicts are driven mainly by religious differences (see the chapter on Jerusalem). In the case of language, it is possible and widely considered to be desirable to learn more than one language, but in the case of religion it is often neither possible (because of conflicting belief systems) nor desirable (from the point of view of most religious adherents) to believe in more than one religion.

48. Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal*, 146. Lévesque's worries may have been somewhat premature—the second referendum for Quebec independence nearly passed in 1995—but today it rings more true.

49. *Ibid.*, 219.

50. [www.nationalpost.com/news/story.html?id=716369](http://www.nationalpost.com/news/story.html?id=716369).

51. See, e.g., "Changes Are Needed to Improve Life for Anglos," *Montreal Gazette*, 5 October 2008, A16.

52. It is quite telling, for example, that the enjoyable novel by the nationalist writer Yves Beauchemin, *Charles le téméraire: Un saut dans le vide* (Montreal: Fides, 2005), features a character who hits the road looking for his place in society and the novel takes place entirely on the east side of Montreal and the Francophone parts of Quebec. Beauchemin had been one of the key figures arguing for monolingual French public signs (see Lise Gauvin, "La mobilisation des écrivains," in *Le français au Québec*, 371–72).

53. Simon Langlois, "L'avenir de la langue française," in *Le français au Québec*, 528.

54. Quoted in Jim Hynes, *Montreal Book of Everything*, 24. Having said that, the effort to maintain French in Montreal is not typically viewed in grand terms as "the battle against globalization," as might be more typical in Paris. The causes of and remedies for Montreal's linguistic conflicts are widely considered to be more local in nature, and the fact that English is the language of globalization is less crucial to the debates.

55. My father's book *Saturday Night at the Bagel Factory* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1972)—winner of the Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour—first drew attention to Montreal's charming and eccentric characters, if I may say so. Montreal's cheap rental spaces (along with San Francisco, it is the only North American city with more renters than homeowners) and good urban transportation network (approximately 40 percent of households do not own a car) provides the "material foundation" for a high proportion of relatively poor bohemians and eccentrics.

56. The Cirque du Soleil and the Just for Laughs Festival are two of the most influential products of such outlooks. It's worth noting that public policy also promotes non-utilitarian outlooks: at least 1 percent of all new public construction budgets in Montreal must be spent on public art (Adam Sachs, "Montreal in Play," *National Geographic Traveler*, March 2009, 63). On Montrealers' joie de vivre, see also Bill Brownstein, *Montreal 24: Twenty-Four Hours in the Life of a City* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 2008), 82, 102, 118.

57. Alan Patten, "Political Theory and Language Policy," *Political Theory* 29, no. 5 (October 2001): 705.

58. *Hostie* literally means "Host," the body of Christ. Most Francophone Québécois swearwords, such as *tabarnac* (the receptacle where the Sacramental bread and wine are kept for holy communion), *calice* (chalice, the cup holding the holy wine), *ciboire* (ciborium, chalice-like sacramental vessel), and *calvaire* (place outside of Jerusalem's Old City where Christ was crucified) refer to sacred items in Catholic masses, one of the ways in which the language and culture of pre-revolutionary France continues to influence French spoken in Quebec (see Marcel, *Mythes et réalités dans l'histoire du Québec*, chap. 14, for other examples). And now, many Anglophones and allophones use such swearwords as well!

59. Quoted in Sachs, "Montreal in Play," 63.

60. This account of my last days with my father draws on [www.vehiculepress.com/montreal/tribute\\_bell.html](http://www.vehiculepress.com/montreal/tribute_bell.html).

61. Richler, *Home Sweet Home*, 192. For the uninitiated, the worst-performing teams usually have the first picks in the draft system so as to increase the likelihood of parity among teams.

62. A seminar on the Canadiens "religion" is currently being offered at the Université de Montréal by the theologian Olivier Bauer. He suggests that Quebec's Roman Catholic traditions and Montreal's perception of itself as hockey's birthplace have combined to create a particularly potent liturgy (Peggy Curren, "Habs 101: It's a Religious Experience," *Montreal Gazette*, 9 January 2009, A8).

## SINGAPORE

1. The authors of a recent book on the precolonial history of Singapore argue that the modern city-state should not be seen as a historical anomaly. Rather, since its independence in 1965, Singapore has resumed its traditional role as an open port city, a role it had played in the region since the first millennium CE. See Derek Heng, Kwa Chong Guan, and Tan Tai Yong, *Singapore: A 700-Year History—From Emporium to World City* (Singapore: National Archives of Singapore, 2009).

2. Carl A. Trocki, *Singapore: Wealth, Power, and the Culture of Control* (London: Routledge, 2006), 47.

3. *Ibid.*, 64, 20.

4. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/-cite\\_ref-27](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/-cite_ref-27); BBC, "On This Day—1942: Singa-

pore Forced to Surrender,” [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/15/newsid\\_3529000/3529447.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/15/newsid_3529000/3529447.stm) (retrieved 5 January 2007).

5. According to one count, “50,000 Singapore Chinese were massacred during the occupation.” John Keay, “Singapore: The Lion City,” in *The Great Cities in History*, ed. John Julius Norwich (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 269.

6. Britain also had control over internal security jointly with Singapore and Malaysia under the Internal Security Council.

7. See Tan Siok Sun, *Goh Keng Swee: A Portrait* (Singapore: EDN, 2007), 116–23.

8. Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story* (Singapore: Prentice Hall, 1994), 9.

9. Goh Keng Swee, *The Economics of Modernization* (Singapore: Asia Pacific Press, 1972), 146–48.

10. D. C. Lau, trans., *Mencius* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1984), IA.7 (I have modified the translation).

11. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, in *Collected Works* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975–98), 5:49.

12. Edwin Lee, *Singapore: The Unexpected Nation* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008), 648.

13. Souchow Yao, *Singapore: The State and the Culture of Excess* (London: Routledge, 2007), 38.

14. Trocki, *Singapore*, 107.

15. See Tilak Doshi and Peter Coclanis, “The Economic Architect: Goh Keng Swee,” in *Lee’s Lieutenants: Singapore’s Old Guard*, ed. Lam Peng Er and Kevin Y. L. Tan (St. Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1999). On several key issues, Dr. Goh clashed with Lee Kuan Yew and eventually got his way. Melanie Chew, *Leaders of Singapore* (Singapore: Resource Press, 1996), 142. In the eyes of many observers (especially foreign admirers of the Singapore model), however, Lee gets all the credit as the ideas man. For example, Bernard Yeung, writing in the influential Chinese periodical *Caijing*, chose Lee as the Asian who did most to influence the world in the 1970s, without noting that Singapore’s economic policies were put forward mainly by his “lieutenants” such as Dr. Goh. Bernard Yeung, “Lingxiu Shijie” [Claiming a Century], *Caijing*, annual special, 2009, 46–51. In an interview with Lee before the 2008 U.S. presidential election, Tom Plate exhibited the most unabashed form of hero-worship:

*Q:* You have a candidate in the coming American presidential election that you prefer? You’d like to endorse whom? I have my candidate, but you’ve got to get American citizenship!

*Lee:* Who’s your candidate?

*Q:* You! You’ve helped run this pretty well country [*sic*] for so many years.

[www.asiamedia.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=79541](http://www.asiamedia.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=79541).

16. Diane K. Mauzy and R. S. Milne, *Singapore’s Politics under the People’s Action Party* (London: Routledge, 2002), 67, 9.



17. Quoted in Han Fook Kwang, Warren Fernandez, and Sumiko Tan, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Man and His Ideas* (Singapore: Times Editions, 1998), 109.
18. See Yao, *Singapore*, 124–25.
19. Trocki, *Singapore*, 179.
20. *Ibid.*, 124.
21. Quoted in Han, Fernandez, and Tan, *Lee Kuan Yew*, 109.
22. See Garry Rodan, *The Political Economy of Singapore's Industrialization: National State and International Capital* (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1989), chap. 3.
23. Trocki, *Singapore*, 160, 176.
24. Quoted in *Straits Times*, 12 December 1992.
25. Trocki, *Singapore*, 129.
26. Quoted in Han, Fernandez, and Tan, *Lee Kuan Yew*, 136, 135.
27. Quoted in Chee Soon Juan, *A Nation Cheated* (Singapore: 2008), 90.
28. Cherian George, *Singapore: The Air-Conditioned Nation* (Singapore: Landmark Books, 2000), 15.
29. Quoted in the *International Herald Tribune*, 9–10 November 1991.
30. Cherian George, *Straits Times*, 11 July 1993.
31. Tambyah Siok Kuan, Tan Soo Juan, and Kau Ah Keng, *The Wellbeing of Singaporeans: Values, Lifestyles, Satisfaction and Quality of Life* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2010), 111. See also 97–98.
32. Chee, *A Nation Cheated*, 81; Mauzy and Milne, *Singapore*, 189–90.
33. Lee, *Singapore*, 651; Michael D. Barr and Zlatko Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore: Elitism, Ethnicity and the Nation-Building Project* (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press, 2008), 267.
34. See Lee, *Singapore*, 587.
35. Quoted in Kwok Kian Woon, “The Moral Condition of Democratic Society.” *Commentary: The Journal of the National University of Singapore Society* 11, no. 1 (1993), 23.
36. Quoted in *ibid.*, 25.
37. Quoted in Mauzy and Milne, *Singapore*, 52.
38. Quoted in Trocki, *Singapore*, 171.
39. Chee, *A Nation Cheated*, 82.
40. *Ibid.*, 87.
41. *Ibid.*, 77, 98–99.
42. George, *Singapore*, 207.
43. Quoted in Lee, *Singapore*, 650.
44. Barr and Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore*, 88.
45. Trocki, *Singapore*, 91.
46. Mauzy and Milne, *Singapore*, 134.
47. Quoted in *ibid.*, 100.
48. Chua Beng Huat, “Communitarianism without Competitive Politics in Singapore,” in *Communitarian Politics in Asia*, ed. Chua Beng Huat (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 90.

49. Barr and Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore*, 98.
50. Quoted in Christopher Tremewan, *The Political Economy of Social Control in Singapore* (Houndsmills: Macmillan / St. Antony's College, 1994), 107–8.
51. Barr and Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore*, 219.
52. Koh Buck Song, *Straits Times*, 11 July 1994.
53. Mauzy and Milne, *Singapore*, 102, 103; Trocki, *Singapore*, 130.
54. Quoted in Han, Fernandez, and Tan, *Lee Kuan Yew*, 134.
55. Tremewan, *The Political Economy of Social Control in Singapore*, 149; see also Trocki, *Singapore*, 117, 123, 151.
56. Barr and Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore*, 91.
57. Quoted in Tremewan, *The Political Economy of Social Control in Singapore*, 131.
58. Quoted in Lee, *Singapore*, 621.
59. Chua, “Communitarianism without Competitive Politics in Singapore,” 89.
60. Lily Zubaidah Rahim Ishak, “The Paradox of Ethnic-Based Self-Help Groups,” in *Debating Singapore*, ed. Derek da Cunha (Singapore: Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, 1994).
61. Mauzy and Milne, *Singapore*, 113; Barr and Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore*, 51.
62. Barr and Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore*, 87; Trocki, *Singapore*, 153.
63. Chee Soon Juan, *Dare to Change: An Alternative Vision for Singapore* (Singapore: Singapore Democratic Party, 1994), 25.
64. See, e.g., Nathan Gardels, “Interview with Lee Kuan Yew,” *New Perspectives Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (winter 2010).
65. Quoted in Mauzy and Milne, *Singapore*, 51.
66. Samuel Huntington, “American Democracy in Relation to Asia,” in *Democracy and Capitalism: Asian and American Perspectives*, ed. Robert Bartley et al. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), 28.
67. Quoted in Yao, *Singapore*, 186.
68. Quoted in Han, Fernandez, and Tan, *Lee Kuan Yew*, 315.
69. Quoted in Lee, *Singapore*, 547.
70. Quoted in Han, Fernandez, and Tan, *Lee Kuan Yew*, 315.
71. Barr and Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore*, 209.
72. Mauzy and Milne, *Singapore*, 46–49; Barr and Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore*, 64.
73. Trocki, *Singapore*, 130. Not surprisingly, such preferences owe much to Lee Kuan Yew's view that “while the scholar is still the greatest factor in economic progress, he will be so only if he uses his brains not in studying the great books, classical texts and poetry, but in capturing and discovering new knowledge, and applying himself to R&D, management and marketing, banking and finance and the myriad new subjects that need to be mastered.” Quoted in Benjamin Wong and Xunming Huang, “Political Legitimacy in Singapore,” *Politics and Policy* 38, no. 3 (2010): 529.
74. Barr and Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore*, 192–93.
75. It is not always easy to separate the influence of culture from government policy, however. Singapore schools do not allow headscarves for Muslim girls, so many parents

send their girls to madrassas, which tend to be weak in secular subjects (but the government has forced madrassas to shift their curriculum away from being purely religious schools, with some success—see Norimitsu Onishi, “In Singapore, a More Progressive Islamic Education,” *New York Times*, 23 April 2009). And the same Malay parents often send their sons to regular schools because the common desire is to raise conservative daughters who stay at home while the boys join capitalist society.

76. Barr and Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore*, 216.

77. Mauzy and Milne, *Singapore*, 55.

78. [http://wopedia.mobi/en/Government\\_of\\_Singapore\\_Investment\\_Corporation](http://wopedia.mobi/en/Government_of_Singapore_Investment_Corporation). On the lack of transparency of the GIC, see Chee, *A Nation Cheated*, 123–24.

79. Yeo, *Singapore*, 128.

80. Quoted in Barr and Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore*, 208.

81. *Ibid.*, 206.

82. Yeo, *Singapore*, 131; Chee, *A Nation Cheated*, 90.

83. It is also worth asking why high salaries for public officials are less controversial in Hong Kong. One reason is that the salaries are higher in Singapore, but another reason is that policies of the government in Hong Kong (including high salaries for officials) are subject to rigorous public scrutiny (and public officials are routinely pilloried in the press); hence, whatever emerges from the debates has more legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

84. Karl Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Program,” in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 568–69.

85. The salaries of top government officials are pegged to what they would supposedly get in the private sector, though public-sector benefits such as pensions and social prestige do not figure in the calculations.

86. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong seems to recognize the problem, at least in terms of public perception. In 2007, he decided to hold his salary at the present level for five years, with the increment going to charity. This “bit of financial sacrifice” is meant to enhance his moral standing with Singaporeans (quoted in Wong and Huang, “Political Legitimacy in Singapore,” 539).

87. Quoted in Mauzy and Milne, *Singapore*, 61.

88. Barr and Skrbis, *Constructing Singapore*, 117.

89. Yeo, *Singapore*, 148.

90. [www.spp.nus.edu.sg/ips/docs/Media/yr2000/Press%20-%20Citizens%20and%20the%20Nation%20\(web\).pdf](http://www.spp.nus.edu.sg/ips/docs/Media/yr2000/Press%20-%20Citizens%20and%20the%20Nation%20(web).pdf).

91. In May 2010, I learned with even greater sadness that Dr. Goh had passed away.

92. [www.goodreads.com/quotes/show/155480](http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/show/155480).

93. The websites [www.mrbrownsow.com](http://www.mrbrownsow.com) and [www.TalkingCock.com](http://www.TalkingCock.com) openly satirize the Singapore government and its actions. A whole genre has emerged to satirize kiasu behavior in education and other areas of social life in Singapore, such as the excellent Singaporean film *I No Stupid*.

94. Singapore does not allow dual citizenship, so those holding other passports must

give them up when they become Singaporean citizens, but Singapore's low tax rates make it easier to "take the plunge."

95. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 519.

96. For the complete speech, see [www.yawningbread.org/apdx\\_2007/imp-359.htm](http://www.yawningbread.org/apdx_2007/imp-359.htm).

97. Mauzy and Milne, *Singapore*, 197.

98. Garry Rodan notes, however, that the launch of the Asian Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights by ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) may allow for the incorporation of Singaporean activists into regional human rights networks, with potential benefits for migrant workers in Singapore. Rodan, "Human Rights, Singaporean Style," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 2009.

#### HONG KONG

1. Quoted in Gary McDonogh and Cindy Wong, *Global Hong Kong* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 33.

2. John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," in *John Stuart Mill: Three Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 11.

3. Quoted in Denis Hiault, *Hong Kong: Rendez-vous chinois* (Évreux: Gallimard, 1997), 21.

4. McDonogh and Wong, *Global Hong Kong*, 41, 42.

5. See <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/k/kipling/rudyard/seatosea/chapter9.html>.

6. Wu Qicong yu Zhu Zhuoxiong, *Jian wen zhu ji: Xianggang di yi dai Huaren jian-zhushi de gushi [The Traces of Architecture: The Stories of the First Generation of Chinese Architects in Hong Kong]* (Hong Kong: ET Press, 2007), 15.

7. Peter Cookson Smith, *The Urban Design of Impermanence: Streets, Places and Spaces in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: MCCM Creations, 2006), 77

8. Quoted in McDonogh and Wong, *Global Hong Kong*, 136. Bergère's distinction, however, applies less clearly to premodern China: in the Tang dynasty, for example, the bustling metropolis Changan and Silk Road trading towns testified to the openness and commercial zeal of northern China.

9. Law Wing-sang, "Hong Kong Undercover: An Approach to 'Collaborative Colonialism,'" *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 9, no. 4 (2008): 524–25.

10. McDonogh and Wong, *Global Hong Kong*, 46, 48.

11. Hiault, *Hong Kong: Rendez-vous chinois*, 44.

12. In Singapore, the effect was similar (see the chapter on Singapore).

13. McDonogh and Wong, *Global Hong Kong*, 63–64, 67.

14. *Ibid.*, 69.

15. The British journalist Martin Booth wrote an affectionate memoir of his childhood days in Hong Kong titled *Gweilo: A Memoir of a Hong Kong Childhood* (Ealing: Bantam, 2005).

16. Jiang Shigong, *Zhongguo Xianggang: Wenhua yu zhengzhi de shiye [China Hong*

*Kong: Perspectives on Culture and Politics*] (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2008), 139.

17. Hiault, *Hong Kong: Rendez-vous chinois*, 70.

18. Percy Cradock, *Experiences of China* (London: John Murray, 1994), part 3.

19. Anna Wu, a lawyer who helped found the pressure group Hong Kong Observers in 1975, argues that Murray MacLehose's refusal to introduce elections to the Legislative Council during his tenure as governor (1971–82) was “disastrous” for Hong Kong. By not introducing democracy until the 1990s, the colonial government actually legitimized the PRC government's opposition to political changes. John M. Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 230. On the plus side, MacLehose introduced Hong Kong's influential anticorruption agency and launched a massive public housing program.

20. McDonogh and Wong, *Global Hong Kong*, 105.

21. Jiang, *Zhongguo Xianggang: Wenhua yu zhengzhi de shiye* [*China Hong Kong: Perspectives on Culture and Politics*], 112–21, 149–58.

22. Hong Kong–style capitalism has a way of inspiring even poetic souls attracted to art and music rather than money: see Leanne Ogasawara's beautifully written blog [www.tangdynastytimes.com/2009/04/hong-kong.html](http://www.tangdynastytimes.com/2009/04/hong-kong.html).

23. The pride in, or lack of shame about, the dominance of capital is also illustrated by the fact that the whole front pages of otherwise serious newspapers such as *Ming Pao* are given to advertisements (e.g., the front page of the 6 March 2009 edition of *Ming Pao* is an advertisement for Patek Philippe watches).

24. [www.hoover.org/publications/digest/3513096.html](http://www.hoover.org/publications/digest/3513096.html).

25. Wilson Wong and Sabrina Luk, “Economic Policy,” in *Contemporary Hong Kong Politics: Governance in the Post-1997 Era*, ed. Lam Wai-man, Percy Luen-tim Lui, Wilson Wong, and Ian Holliday (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), 181.

26. See also [www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1931/secC12.html](http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1931/secC12.html).

27. McDonogh and Wong, *Global Hong Kong*, 12; Smith, *The Urban Design of Impermanence*, 79.

28. Chen Cuier, Chen Liqiao, Wu Qicong, and Chen Jianguo, *The 逼* [*Pressure*] *City* (Hong Kong: Renzheng shiwuju chuban, 2005), 13.

29. Paul Wilding, “Social Policy,” in *Contemporary Hong Kong Politics*, 209.

30. Ling-hin Li, *Development Appraisal of Land in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2006), 211, 18.

31. Gary Cheung, “Property Giants' Influence Grows,” *South China Morning Post* (SCMP), 12 April 2010.

32. Wong and Luk, “Economic Policy,” in *Contemporary Hong Kong Politics*, 184.

33. According to Karl Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*, the meritocratic ideal that is supposed to inform capitalist societies—to each according to his contribution—will be implemented only in “lower communism” that does away with class privilege. But lower communism is still flawed because it rewards and penalizes people on the basis of natural endowments; hence “higher communism” will implement the distributive principle “to each according to his needs.”

34. Letter to author.

35. Ronnie C. Chan, "What You Are Not Supposed to Know about Hong Kong," in *China's Hong Kong Transformed: Retrospect and Prospects beyond the First Decade*, ed. Ming K. Chan (Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, 2008), 100. On the monopolies in pre-handover Hong Kong, see also [www.independent.co.uk/news/business/paragon-of-free-markets-is-riddled-with-monopolies-1598537.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/paragon-of-free-markets-is-riddled-with-monopolies-1598537.html); and Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong*, 229.

36. Toward the end of British rule, large numbers of young Britons poured into Hong Kong, attracted by preferential immigration and employment status: they were given the acronym FILTH (Failed in London, Try Hong Kong).

37. Chan, "What You Are Not Supposed to Know about Hong Kong," 101, 109.

38. [www.helpersfordomestichelpers.com/pb/wp\\_aa0b2bed/wp\\_aa0b2bed.html](http://www.helpersfordomestichelpers.com/pb/wp_aa0b2bed/wp_aa0b2bed.html).

39. Betty Yung, *Hong Kong's Housing Policy: A Case Study in Social Justice* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), 7.

40. Nelson Chow, "Social Welfare: The Way Ahead," in *From Colony to SAR: Hong Kong's Challenges Ahead*, ed. Joseph Y. S. Cheng and Sonny S. H. Lo (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1995), 400.

41. It's worth asking how Hong Kong can afford to fund such extensive social welfare services given the low rate of taxation. A large chunk of the government's revenue, to repeat, comes from land transactions, but 6 percent of the revenue comes from "betting duty." The latter income is derived mainly from the proceeds of the popular Mark Six lotteries and the Hong Kong Jockey Club. This money is used to finance welfare services through grants and loans, which explains the rather curious phenomenon that several hospital wards in Hong Kong are decorated with plaques from the Hong Kong Jockey Club.

42. Yun-wing Sung, "The Hong Kong Economy Since Reversion," in *China's Hong Kong Transformed*, 195–98.

43. *Ibid.*, 192.

44. "20,000 Jobless to Be Put to Work," *SCMP*, 10 December 1998, 1; "Grounds for Discontent," *SCMP*, 30 July 2010.

45. Wong and Luk, "Economic Policy," in *Contemporary Hong Kong Politics*, 183.

46. Lam Wai-man, "Political Context," in *Contemporary Hong Kong Politics*, 2.

47. [www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2294&Itemid=173](http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2294&Itemid=173); Kevin Drew, "Retrial in Murder Case Spotlights Justice and Class Division in Hong Kong," *New York Times*, 9 January 2011.

48. Ming K. Chan, "Transforming China's Hong Kong: Toward 2047 Convergence?" in *China's Hong Kong Transformed*, 30.

49. See articles in 2008 and 2009 issues of the *Hong Kong Journal*, available free online: [www.hkjournal.org/](http://www.hkjournal.org/).

50. Wilding, "Social Policy," 206, 210.

51. See "The Four Reasons HK Banks Are Unlikely to Go Under," *SCMP*, 16 October 2008, A10.

52. Wang Zhuoqi and Zhang Zhouqiao, "Fulizhuyi yu fuli yilai de guanxi: Xiang-

gang de shiwei yanjiu [The Relation between Welfarism and Welfare Dependence: Some Research from Hong Kong],” in *Xin shiji Tai Gang shihui fengmao [Characteristics of Hong Kong and Taiwan Society in the New Century]*, ed. Huang Shaolun, Yi Baoce, and Liang Shirong (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Asia Research Center, 2008), 206, 208.

53. Joseph Chan, “Giving Priority to the Worst Off: A Confucian Perspective on Social Welfare,” in *Confucianism for the Modern World*, ed. Daniel A. Bell and Hahn Chaibong (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), chap. 10.

54. Yung, *Hong Kong’s Housing Policy*, 76–81, 107.

55. Arguably, the public acceptance of massive public funding for education, including universities that still offer high salaries, can be at least partly explained because the policy coheres with the widely shared Confucian value of respect for education. Moreover, the fact that the salaries are not determined by market principles—professors in “impractical” disciplines such as philosophy make as much as professors of corporate law—may be at least partly explained by the high value placed on a humanities education in a Confucian moral framework (though the origins of such policies may owe more to English civil servants trained in the humanities at institutions like Eton and Oxford).

56. Yung, *Hong Kong’s Housing Policy*, 128.

57. Sure enough, Hong Kong’s economy bounced back relatively quickly from the 2008 financial crisis. Bettina Wassaner, “Finance Jobs Hint at Recovery in Asia,” *New York Times*, 2 September 2009.

58. On the competition between Hong Kong and Shanghai as rival financial centers, see the October 2009 issue of the *Hong Kong Journal* ([www.hkjournal.org](http://www.hkjournal.org)).

59. [www.investhk.gov.hk/UploadFile/IPA\\_global\\_financial\\_crisis.pdf](http://www.investhk.gov.hk/UploadFile/IPA_global_financial_crisis.pdf).

60. “Unsmiling” is not problematic in the Hong Kong context; quite the opposite, in fact. McDonald’s learned that it could not transplant its formula—service with a smile—to Hong Kong. As James L. Watson notes, Hong Kong residents place a high value on a public expression of “seriousness,” and service workers at McDonald’s are expected to assume a facial expression that reflects attention to detail and determination, with a result that looks more like a frown than a smile. A smile would be perceived as an excess of congeniality, solicitude, or familiarity in Hong Kong. James Watson, “McDonald’s in Hong Kong: Consumerism, Dietary Change, and the Rise of a Children’s Culture,” in *Golden Arches East: McDonald’s in East Asia*, ed. James Watson (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 90–92.

61. Chen et al., *The 逼 [Pressure] City*, 13.

62. Jonah Lehrer, “How the City Hurts Your Brain . . . and What You Can Do about It,” *boston.com*, 2 January 2009.

63. Smith, *The Urban Design of Impermanence*, 119.

64. [www.indexmundi.com/hong\\_kong/life\\_expectancy\\_at\\_birth.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/hong_kong/life_expectancy_at_birth.html).

65. In mid-2011, it was surpassed by the 118-story International Commerce Center.

66. [http://architecture.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=architecture&cdn=homegarden&tm=33&gps=142\\_1150\\_728\\_332&f=10&rt=33&bt=1&bts=1&zu=http%3A//www.ifc.com.hk/english/onetwo.aspx](http://architecture.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=architecture&cdn=homegarden&tm=33&gps=142_1150_728_332&f=10&rt=33&bt=1&bts=1&zu=http%3A//www.ifc.com.hk/english/onetwo.aspx).

67. Chen et al., *The 逼 [Pressure] City*, 18.

68. Such an outlook may also help to explain why there is less pressure for redistribution of wealth in Hong Kong: if wealth is mainly a function of luck (like winning a lottery), then there is less resentment against the rich. Instead of clamoring for change, one hopes for better luck next time.

69. A female friend who lives in Japan told me an interesting story that reflects the difference between consuming for the self and other-regarding forms of consumption. When she visited Hong Kong, she debated whether to buy a beautiful winter Max Mara coat that was on sale for 75 percent off (but it still cost one thousand U.S. dollars, so she passed). The inside pockets were lined with mink, and the salesgirl explained how much Japanese customers loved the “hidden luxury.”

70. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, vol. 1, trans. Franz Rosenthal (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), 282.

71. Quoted in Fareed Zakaria, “A Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 1994, 115.

72. The only real way to test such claims is to ask what people do in cases of conflict (or at least to ask what they say they would do). According to an Asia Barometer values survey conducted in 2006, Hong Kongers ranked values like “spending time with my family” above self-expression values like “earning a high income” and “being successful at work.” Ming Sing, “The Quality of Life in Hong Kong,” *Social Indicators Research* 92 (2009): 312–15.

73. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_birth\\_rate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_birth_rate); and Chen et al., *The 逼 [Pressure] City*, 96.

74. *SCMP*, 6 May 2010.

75. Quoted in Smith, *The Urban Design of Impermanence*, 135.

76. McDonogh and Wong, *Global Hong Kong*, 113.

77. Yan-yan Yip and Christine Loh, “New Generation, Greening Politics and Growing Civil Society,” in *China’s Hong Kong Transformed*, 213, 220.

78. A recent book by Lu Dayue titled *Si dai Xianggangren [Four Generations of Hong Kongers]* (Hong Kong: Chuanggen guanggao yinshua gongsi, 2007) argues that it is difficult for young Hong Kongers to meet the high expectations thrust on them by elders and that the newest generation is unsure of what they want (64–65). When the book was used by a Hong Kong government official to explain (away) the grievances of young critics of the railway project, the protesters sharply objected on the grounds that they were motivated by idealistic considerations rather than self-interest.

79. Ming, “Transforming China’s Hong Kong,” 18–19; Leo Ou-fan Lee, *City between Worlds: My Hong Kong* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 56.

80. Note, however, that Hong Kong–style civicism does not necessarily translate into a preference for more political democracy. According to the East Asian Barometer survey, Hong Kongers’ perception of their own participatory abilities was the lowest in Asia: only 1.5 percent believed they were capable of understanding and participating in politics. Wai-man Lam and Hsin-chi Kuan, “Democratic Transition Frustrated: The Case of Hong Kong,” in *How East Asians View Democracy*, ed. Yan-Han Chu et al. (New



York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 198. In June 2010, the Democrats endorsed a constitutional proposal supported by Beijing that would allow voters to elect five functional constituency lawmakers—but that seemed to further postpone direct elections for the territory’s decision makers—and their leaders rose in the polls (“Albert Ho, Emily Law Rise in Poll,” *SCMP*, 21 July 2010).

81. Tsung-Yi Michelle Huang, *Walking between Slums and Skyscrapers: Illusions of Open Space in Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Shanghai* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 52.

82. Charlie Q. L. Xue, “Hong Kong Architecture: Identities and Prospects—A Discourse on Tradition and Creation,” in *Building Design and Development in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, 2003), 91; Charmaine Carvalho, “Building Smart,” *SCMP*, 16 October 2008.

83. McDonogh and Wong, *Global Hong Kong*, 34.

84. This is not to imply that the government responded to the crisis in efficient ways or did all it could to protect health-care workers. For a critical analysis of the government’s performance, see Ngok Ma, “SARS and the Limits of the Hong Kong Administrative State,” *Asian Perspective* 28, no. 1 (2004): 99–120.

85. Joyce Hor-Chung Lau, “Eating for Charity at Hong Kong’s Fanciest Spots,” *New York Times*, 17 August 2009.

86. [www.hku.hk/socsc/moei/](http://www.hku.hk/socsc/moei/).

87. Denis’s team won the case (Mark McDonald, “Feng Shui Master Loses Claim to Tycoon’s Fortune,” *International Herald Tribune*, 3 February 2010), though Mr. Chan’s attorneys said they would appeal.

88. A different essay could perhaps be written about Hong Kong arguing that the ethos of Hong Kong is the rule of law and related liberal political values (see, e.g., <http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/香港核心价值>). The high visibility of human-rights lawyers in Hong Kong as well as strong social support for civil liberties does lend some force to that argument. However, Michael W. Dowdle argues that, just as the English-language-based “Hong Kong legal system makes the particular ideas and concerns of the 80 percent of the population that tends to live their lives more or less exclusively in Cantonese irrelevant to the law, it also makes the law irrelevant to this population.” Dowdle, “Constitutionalism in the Shadow of the Common Law,” in *Interpreting Hong Kong’s Basic Law: The Struggle for Coherence*, ed. Hualing Fu, Lison Harris, and Simon N. M. Young (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 63–64. It is therefore questionable whether the common law has taken root in Hong Kong.

## BEIJING

1. I’ve kept the menu and can show it to anyone who doesn’t believe this story. The Chinese-language menu has a similar footnote, though it says that the dish is reserved for “national-level” (rather than “senior”) leaders (*guojia lingdao*).

2. 20090219儒家邮报第85期 (*rujia youbao di 85 qi*).

3. Stella Dong, *Shanghai: The Rise and Fall of a Decadent City* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 45, 53.

4. Although Chinese were banned from the park, there is no evidence that the sign itself existed. Robert A. Bickers and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, "Shanghai's 'Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted' Sign: Legend, History and Contemporary Symbol," *China Quarterly*, no. 142 (1995): 444–66.

5. Shanghainese show stronger preferences for Western products and well-known brands than do people in Beijing and Xiamen-Fuzhou. Wei R. and Pan Z., "Mass Media and Consumerist Values in the People's Republic of China," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 11, no. 1 (1999): 75–96.

6. In early 2011, I signed a contract for an academic post at Jiaotong University in Shanghai, which will allow me to spend more time in the city and, I hope, develop a more nuanced and balanced account of the city's ethos.

7. Lillian M. Li, Alison J. Dray-Novey, and Haili Kong, *Beijing: From Imperial Capital to Olympic City* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 8.

8. Wang Bo, *Beijing: Yi zuo shiqu jianzhu zhaxue de chengshi [Beijing: A City That Has Lost Its Philosophy of Architecture]* (Shenyang: Liaoning kexue jishu chubanshe, 2009), 26–27. Under Manchu rule, however, the design of the city took on less than harmonious characteristics: the minority Manchus established a quasi-apartheid regime that banned ethnic Han Chinese from living inside the inner part of the city. Roger Darrobers, *Pékin: Capitale Impériale, Mégapole de Demain* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008), 29.

9. Li, Dray-Novey, and Kong, *Beijing*, 173.

10. Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 15.

11. *Ibid.*, 66. The five stars were also put on the Chinese flag, but it's unclear what the stars actually correspond to: [http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/daniel\\_a\\_bell/2006/10/post\\_502.html](http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/daniel_a_bell/2006/10/post_502.html). The first postrevolutionary dollar note issued by the new Chinese Central Bank also featured Tiananmen Gate.

12. Wu, *Remaking Beijing*, 8. Military considerations, particularly the building of the subway, may also have been a factor that justified the destruction of the city walls. Yue Zhang, "Re-imagining Chinese Modernity: The Demolition and Restoration of the City Walls of Beijing, 1949–2005," manuscript, University of Illinois at Chicago, 13.

13. Quoted in Li, Dray-Novey, and Kong, *Beijing*, 176. Liang had submitted a plan to create a garden promenade along the walls that would have made them even more beautiful. See the illustration in Geremie R. Barmé, "Beijing, a Garden of Violence," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 9, no. 4 (2008): 617. Before the Communists came to power, the mayor of Beijing (in 1933) had stressed goals of preservation similar to those in Liang's plan that were also designed to appeal to foreign tourists. Madeleine Yue Dong, "Defining Beijing: Urban Reconstruction and National Identity, 1928–1936," in *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900–1950*, ed. Joseph W. Esherick (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 121–35.

14. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century urban reformers had also sought

to modernize Chinese cities to increase the capacity of the state. See Kristin Stapleton, *Civilizing Chengdu: Chinese Urban Reform, 1895–1937* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 1–2, 257. Mao pushed such ideas to their radical extreme, however.

15. To be more precise, 5 percent of the buildings from prerevolutionary times remain in Beijing. Jasper Becker notes that “even Baron Haussmann left 40 per cent of nineteenth-century Paris untouched.” Becker, *City of Heavenly Tranquility: Beijing in the History of China* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 8. Most recent books on Beijing lament the scale of destruction of old Beijing; see, e.g., Michael Meyer, *The Last Days of Old Beijing: Life in the Vanishing Backstreets of a City Transformed* (New York: Walker & Company, 2008). On the plus side, plans to bulldoze the Forbidden City had to be abandoned in the chaos of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Geremie R. Barmé, *The Forbidden City* (London: Profile Books, 2008), 15. The Forbidden City is one of six sites in Beijing (out of a total of thirty-four in China) that are on the World Heritage List. Luo Zhewen and Li Jiangshu, *Lao Beijing [Old Beijing]* (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiayu chubanshe, 2006), 2–4. Chinese-language books about Beijing tend not to focus exclusively on architecture; they also discuss aspects of Beijing culture where there has been more continuity. For example, the first half of Shi Lianlao and Shangguan Wenxuan’s *Qutan lao Beijing wenhua [Interesting Discussions about the Culture of Old Beijing]* (Beijing: Zhishi chanquan chubanshe, 2005) is devoted to Beijing’s culinary culture.

16. Wu, *Remaking Beijing*, 134, 240. However, Michael Dutton and his coauthors note that Tiananmen Square is a potent symbol of nationhood for Chinese tourists. Michael Dutton, Hsiu-ju Stacy Lo, and Dong Dong Wu, *Beijing Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 2–3, 11, 206. Still, judging by the experience of my students who know about the ugly events of June 4, 1989, I would surmise that the symbolism of Tiananmen Square will no longer be so inspiring once public discussion of those events is no longer taboo.

17. Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (London: Hutchinson, 1990), 631.

18. Jung Chang and Jon Holliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (New York: Anchor, 2006).

19. The authoritative account of Karl Marx’s theory of history is G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx’s Theory of History: A Defence*, expanded edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

20. No doubt he was also inspired by the example of Russia in the early 1950s: at the time, it seemed to be a country that had successfully skipped the capitalist phase.

21. It could be argued that Marx, at the end of his life, hinted at the possibility that a largely agrarian society like Russia could move on to communism. But he would likely have dismissed an effort like the Great Leap Forward, in the same way he dismissed efforts at implementing utopian socialism in his day.

22. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, in *Collected Works* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975–98), 5:49.

23. This is not to imply that there is only one layer of political authority in Beijing.

The fact that there are two important layers of political authority—city-level and national-level—sometimes makes it harder to solve problems in Beijing, such as the traffic jams, which seem to be getting progressively worse over the years. And sometimes the city authorities can be defiant of the central authorities: according to Bo Zhiyue, there were two confrontations between the capital and the center in the 1966–1995 period, and the center prevailed both times. Bo, “Economic Development and Corruption: Beijing beyond ‘Beijing,’” *Journal of Contemporary China* 9, no. 25 (2000): 484–86.

24. <http://libcom.org/news/58000-mass-incidents-china-first-quarter-unrest-grows-largest-ever-recorded-06052009>.

25. Canada repeated this ignominious feat at the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary. I’m pleased to report that Canada finally put to rest its “century of [Olympic] humiliation” at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Calgary, when the country topped the gold medal standings.

26. See [www.blog.newsweek.com/blogs/beijingolympics/archive/2008/08/12/a-harmonious-day-at-the-races.aspx](http://www.blog.newsweek.com/blogs/beijingolympics/archive/2008/08/12/a-harmonious-day-at-the-races.aspx); [www.blog.newsweek.com/blogs/beijingolympics/archive/2008/08/15/view-from-the-stands-patriot-games.aspx](http://www.blog.newsweek.com/blogs/beijingolympics/archive/2008/08/15/view-from-the-stands-patriot-games.aspx).

27. The quotations from Machiavelli here and in subsequent paragraphs are taken from *The Prince*, ed. Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), chap. 21.

28. Quoted in Edward Cody, “China Steps Up Its Argument over Darfur: World Leaders’ Plans to Attend Olympics Used to Push View of Games as Apolitical,” *Washington Post*, 8 March 2008.

29. <http://news.sohu.com/20070312/n248674721.shtml>.

30. [http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/daniel\\_a\\_bell/2007/04/a\\_great\\_leap\\_forward.html](http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/daniel_a_bell/2007/04/a_great_leap_forward.html).

31. Jasper Becker comments: “Beijing promised the world a ‘People’s Olympics,’ but such vast changes to an ancient city could never have been done in anything but a totalitarian society” (Becker, *City of Heavenly Tranquility*, 292). But Robert Moses carried out brutal displacement of people in a Western-style democratic setting (see the chapter on New York).

32. For a particularly sharp critique of the Grand National Theater, see Wang, *Beijing*, chap. 4. Wang argues that the building is not harmonious with surrounding buildings, that it is environmentally wasteful, that it contradicts key Chinese beliefs, that it is not particularly innovative, that it fails to serve people’s needs, and that the whole thing was decided by politicians with minimal input from the public and experts. Wang views this building as representative of a recent trend in Beijing, namely, that foreign architects use the city as a testing ground for eccentric and expensive buildings that would never get approved in the West. Wang does not object to the role of foreign architects per se, however: he has high praise for the Olympic Stadium (the Bird’s Nest), designed by the Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron. The stadium was inspired by a study of Chinese ceramics, and it expresses a harmonious combination of Chinese culture and modern aesthetics (Wang, *Beijing*, chap. 5, sec. 3).

33. The original Beijing Hotel was built by the French in 1915. In postrevolutionary

China, Zhang Bo, the architect of the Great Hall, designed an extension that dwarfed the old structure. The hotel would host important foreign guests and it was intended to make the political statement “that China had finally thrown off the shackles of the colonial era because of the Communist liberation of the city and the country” (Dutton et al., *Beijing Time*, 78). It is now a luxury hotel operated by the Singapore-based Raffles chain. Raffles, of course, was the British imperialist who founded modern Singapore (see the chapter on Singapore).

34. See Yu Dan, *“Lun Yu” Xin De [Reflections on the Analects of Confucius]* (Beijing: China Publishing House, 2006), 90, 91, 93, 99.

35. Thomas S. Scanlon, *Eros and Greek Athletics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 268.

36. See [www.dissentmagazine.org/online.php?id=242](http://www.dissentmagazine.org/online.php?id=242).

37. Philip J. Ivanhoe, “Asian Tradition and New Humanity,” in *2009 Global Civilization and Peace* (Seoul: Jimoondang, 2010), 123–33.

38. Here and elsewhere, I have modified the translation of the *Record of Music* from <http://chinese.dsturgeon.net/text.pl?node=10113&if=en>.

39. There is some social-scientific evidence to support the Confucian perspective on music. In one recent experiment, teenagers who were exposed to music with other-regarding content (such as Michael Jackson’s “Heal the World”) were more likely to act as good Samaritans than those who listened to music with a neutral effect (Peter Walker, “Positive Lyrics Keep Teens on Right Track,” *South China Morning Post*, 8 January 2010). Presumably, the negative effect would have been even more pronounced had the subjects listened to songs like the Sex Pistols’ “Anarchy in the UK.”

40. Robert C. Tucker, ed. *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), 160.

41. Terry Eagleton, *The Meaning of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 171–73.

42. Avner—himself a professional jazz musician for several years before he became an academic—reminds me that jazz musicians also owe respect to history: “You see, the history is the first sentence one plays. You then improvise by respecting this sentence. Then the third player also improvises by respecting the first two and what they have done, and he builds on the first player’s sentence.” Still, Confucians do place less emphasis on self-expression and improvisation. Even if I’m not being creative in caring for my parents, I still owe obligations to them by virtue of the role I occupy and what they have done for me in the past.

43. My sister, I should confess, did most of the caring for my father in the final years of his life. I spent my time writing about filial piety, and she spent her time practicing it.

44. See Xiaoqing Diana Lin, *Peking University: Chinese Scholarship and Intellectuals, 1898–1937* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005); and Fabio Lanza, “The Beijing University Students in the May Fourth Era: A Collective Biography,” in *The Human Tradition in Modern China*, ed. Kenneth J. Hammond and Kristin Stapleton (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 117–34.

45. That was chapter 5 of my book *East Meets West: Human Rights and Democracy in East Asia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000). For the Chinese translation, we moved the date to 2017. The book has been published in Taiwan, but it has not yet been approved in mainland China.

46. Zhou Tianyong, “Gongjian: Shiqi da hou Zhongguo zhengzhi tizhi gaige yanjiu baogao’ wenshi [Attack the Fortress: Research Report on China’s Political Reform after the Seventeenth Party Congress],” 12 March 2008, <http://hi.baidu.com/wilianwu/blog/item/a9dd1a301650189da8018e3b.html>.

47. The political sensitivities are illustrated by a recent dispute over a mammoth, thirty-one-foot (9.5 meter) statue of Confucius that was unveiled on the east side of Tiananmen Square on January 11, 2011, facing in the direction of Mao’s portrait. Following agitation by Maoists, the controversial statue was moved to a small courtyard behind the museum and largely out of sight in late April. To be continued . . .

48. See, e.g., Fan Ruiping, ed., *Rujia shehui yu daotong fuxing: Yu Jiang Qing duihua [Confucian Society and the Revival of the Ruling Way: Dialogues with Jiang Qing]* (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2008).

49. See Huang Zongxi, *Waiting for the Dawn: A Plan for the Prince*, trans. William Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 83.

50. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China\\_Can\\_Say\\_No](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China_Can_Say_No).

51. Such nationalists need not seek inspiration only from Confucian sources. For example, Yan Xuetong defends a humane form of nationalism that is inspired by a diverse range of pre-Qin thinkers. Yan, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, ed. Daniel A. Bell and Sun Zhe, trans. Edmund Ryden (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

## OXFORD

1. See [www.ox.ac.uk/about\\_the\\_university/facts\\_and\\_figures/index.html](http://www.ox.ac.uk/about_the_university/facts_and_figures/index.html). It is quite difficult to be accepted: 98.2 percent of Oxford University undergraduates have A-level (high school matriculation) grades of 3 A’s or better.

2. Justin Cartwright, *The Secret Garden: Oxford Revisited* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008).

3. Daniel tells me that in his experience at Oxford, many Asian groups, such as Chinese and Japanese, who normally were hostile to one another developed a kind of solidarity during the Christmas holiday.

4. David Horan, *Oxford: A Cultural and Literary History* (Oxford: Signal Books, 2007), 12.

5. [www.ox.ac.uk/about\\_the\\_university/introducing\\_oxford/a\\_brief\\_history\\_of\\_the\\_university/index.html](http://www.ox.ac.uk/about_the_university/introducing_oxford/a_brief_history_of_the_university/index.html).

6. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Eagle\\_and\\_Child](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Eagle_and_Child); a website called Sacred Destinations: [www.sacred-destinations.com/england/oxford-eagle-and-child.htm](http://www.sacred-destinations.com/england/oxford-eagle-and-child.htm); [www.eaglechildinn.co.uk/](http://www.eaglechildinn.co.uk/); or [www.headington.org.uk/oxon/stgiles/tour/west/48\\_49\\_eagle.htm](http://www.headington.org.uk/oxon/stgiles/tour/west/48_49_eagle.htm).

7. Jeanette Sears, *The Oxford of J.R.R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis* (Oxford: Sears/Opher, 2006), 5.

8. The dissertation later became a much-cited book: Daniel Bell, *Communitarianism and Its Critics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

9. Sophie Huxley, *Oxford Science Walks* (Oxford: Huxley Science Press, n.d.), 4

10. Cartwright, *The Secret Garden*, 189.

11. [www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Robertson\\_Davies/](http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Robertson_Davies/).

12. Horan, *Oxford*, 84.

13. Photo: [www.flickr.com/photos/davidbukach/3956248341/in/photostream/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/davidbukach/3956248341/in/photostream/).

14. [www.st-hildas.ox.ac.uk/index.php/history/histsport.html](http://www.st-hildas.ox.ac.uk/index.php/history/histsport.html).

15. Chris Koenig, "How City and River Inspired Mole's World," *Oxford Mail*, 11 October 2007, [http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/archive/2007/10/11/Pasttimes+%28pasttimes%29/1753036.How\\_city\\_and\\_river\\_inspired\\_Mole\\_s\\_world/](http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/archive/2007/10/11/Pasttimes+%28pasttimes%29/1753036.How_city_and_river_inspired_Mole_s_world/).

16. A prominent physics professor once told me that the only reason he finished his best-known research, conducted when he was at Imperial College London, was that he heard of a colleague who was developing similar ideas elsewhere, and wanted to be the first to publish.

17. Cartwright, *The Secret Garden*.

18. Nick Crafts, "The 'Death of Distance': What Does It Mean for Economic Development?" *World Economics* 6, no. 3 (2005): 1–14.

19. The title is printed on a sign in the Sheldonian Theatre.

20. This is the informal name of SS Philip and James' Church of England Aided Primary School, Oxford.

21. Horan, *Oxford*, 179; *The Coming of the Railway*, [www.dailyinfo.co.uk/guide/cartoonist/thecomingoftherailway.html](http://www.dailyinfo.co.uk/guide/cartoonist/thecomingoftherailway.html).

22. Ian Carter, *Railways and Culture in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 9.

23. A moral tutor is someone in a college to whom a student can turn with concerns about his or her teaching or general welfare; the title and scope of the role may vary widely. See [www.ox.ac.uk/about\\_the\\_university/introducing\\_oxford/oxford\\_glossary/index.html](http://www.ox.ac.uk/about_the_university/introducing_oxford/oxford_glossary/index.html).

24. [www.headington.org.uk/oxon/high/tour/south/logic\\_lane.htm](http://www.headington.org.uk/oxon/high/tour/south/logic_lane.htm).

25. See their website: <http://aristotlerec.webs.com/#>.

26. [www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk/Garden/History%20Sub/obg-history-2.html](http://www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk/Garden/History%20Sub/obg-history-2.html); Huxley, *Oxford Science Walks*, [www.mhs.ox.ac.uk/features/walk/index.htm](http://www.mhs.ox.ac.uk/features/walk/index.htm).

27. [www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk/Garden/History%20Sub/obg-history-2.html](http://www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk/Garden/History%20Sub/obg-history-2.html).

28. Huxley, *Oxford Science Walks*, 2.

29. [www.artweeks.org/index.shtml](http://www.artweeks.org/index.shtml).

30. [www.sundaytimes-oxfordliteraryfestival.co.uk/](http://www.sundaytimes-oxfordliteraryfestival.co.uk/).

31. In the United Kingdom many of the good schools are private, whereas the public system finds it difficult to attract what are called "strong" pupils, namely, children from better-off families with higher academic abilities. But Oxford's school system has managed to attract very good teachers, and it is very common here for elite families to send their children to state schools.

32. Cartwright, *The Secret Garden*, 73.

33. Here, the term *Nonconformism* denotes the religious Protestant movement that refused to conform to the Church of England.

34. [www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Mansfield\\_College,\\_Oxford](http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Mansfield_College,_Oxford).

35. [www.bate.ox.ac.uk/](http://www.bate.ox.ac.uk/).

36. Horan, *Oxford*, 59.

37. [www.bate.ox.ac.uk/smith-harpsichord.html](http://www.bate.ox.ac.uk/smith-harpsichord.html).

38. When I tell this to Daniel, his reaction is that this shows that it's better to learn about different religions than not to learn about any, which is what typically happens in Western secular schools.

39. Many are told by Marilyn Yurdan in *Oxford: Town and Gown* (Oxford: Pisces Publications, 2002).

40. Huxley, *Oxford Science Walks*, 2.

41. [www.pembroke.mcr.com/Freshers/Dining](http://www.pembroke.mcr.com/Freshers/Dining).

42. Compare with the chapter on Jerusalem, where we describe the attitude of the Franciscan monk Brother Oscar, who objects to the idea that eating should be done in silence.

43. See also [www.mhs.ox.ac.uk/features/walk/loc2.htm](http://www.mhs.ox.ac.uk/features/walk/loc2.htm).

44. For the impact of this statistic, see Carole Cadwallader, "It's the Clever Way to Power," *Observer*, 16 March 2008, 4 (review section). The article quotes a state-school graduate saying, "Even if we can get in . . . would we fit in?"

45. I should explain that when I argue that "Oxford" sustains the class system, I do not mean that individual Oxford University teachers are responsible. In fact, Oxford University teachers have a tradition of sensitivity regarding social policies and welfare. For example, in 1985, Oxford lecturers voted 738 to 319 against awarding an honorary degree to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in response to her social policies and education cuts.

46. <http://jacari.blahwaffleblah.com/index.html>.

47. <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~jacari/info/index.html>.

48. General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) is an academic qualification (degree) in specified subjects that students ages fourteen to sixteen take in secondary education in the United Kingdom. Pass grades, are: *A\** (pronounced "A-star"), *A*, *B*, *C*, *D*, *E*, *F*, and *G*. Only grades *A\** to *C* are given much credence by most employers. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General\\_Certificate\\_of\\_Secondary\\_Education#Grading](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Certificate_of_Secondary_Education#Grading).

49. [www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decC/Education\\_and\\_skills\\_statistics\\_occw.htm](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decC/Education_and_skills_statistics_occw.htm).

50. [www.communicate.co.uk/oxford/oxchurchinfo/page5.phtml](http://www.communicate.co.uk/oxford/oxchurchinfo/page5.phtml).

51. *The Big Issue* is a weekly magazine written and sold by homeless people. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Big\\_Issue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Big_Issue).

52. I am amazed and impressed when I read a report about refugees and how they assimilated in Oxford. No doubt the city is nowadays much more aware of the Other and much more liberal and open toward newcomers. See Rory Carnegie and Nikki van der Gaag, *How the World Came to Oxford: Refugee Stories Past and Present* (Oxford: New Internationalist, 2007).



53. I thought about the sign outside Christ Church Meadow: “Meadow Keepers and Constables are instructed to prevent the entrance into the Meadow of all beggars, persons in rugged or very dirty clothes, persons of improper character or who are not decent in appearance and behavior, and to prevent indecent, rude or disorderly conduct of every description.” Was that what it’s all about?

54. Michael J. O’Dowd, *The History of Medications for Women* (New York: Parthenon Publishing, 2001), 31. See also <http://acswebcontent.acs.org/landmarks/landmarks/penicillin/research.html>.

#### BERLIN

1. Juliet Koss, “Coming to Terms with the Present,” *Grey Room* 16 (Summer 2004): 116–31, [www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/1526381041887411](http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/1526381041887411).

2. Will Kymlicka and Bashir Bashir, *The Politics of Reconciliation in Multicultural Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 19.

3. For a photograph, see [www.scrapbookpages.com/berlin2002/RuinedChurch.html](http://www.scrapbookpages.com/berlin2002/RuinedChurch.html).

4. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLMAEhVq2ok](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLMAEhVq2ok); [www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcnEDTnyC7g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcnEDTnyC7g); [www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCXox3l7fWU&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCXox3l7fWU&feature=related); [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFVvKMPVOY8g&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFVvKMPVOY8g&feature=related).

5. For a photograph, see [www.pushpullbar.com/forums/attachment.php?attachmenid=4502&stc=1&d=1128761942](http://www.pushpullbar.com/forums/attachment.php?attachmenid=4502&stc=1&d=1128761942).

6. Rainer Forst, “Toleration,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/toleration/>.

7. When the Jews were emancipated in Berlin in the nineteenth century, they described their existence as “German in the street, Jewish at home.”

8. Michael Walzer, *On Toleration* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 10–11.

9. Forst, “Toleration.”

10. It is interesting to note that Berliners present their history dialectically. The German History Museum near Humboldt University presents its history that way: 1814, Vienna Congress moved the city toward liberalism; Metternich restores the old order; popular pressure is applied; and in 1848, a new era of tolerance begins. Hegel, the founding father of dialectic reasoning, taught at Humboldt University.

11. To read more about the *Places of Remembrance* project, see Koss, “Coming to Terms with the Present.” Interestingly, Koss writes, “[These signs] infiltrate my daily life like urban Post-It notes, furtive reminders of Berlin’s past appearing as I bike to a friend’s house.” Koss is rather critical of this. She claims that when she was in Los Angeles, she used to think of *Places of Remembrance* as an art historian; now that she is in Berlin, she has to think of them as a Jew because they remind her that Jews cannot be full Germans. She claims that “coming to terms with the past” should not be about reminding people about their particular identities but rather allowing full assimilation, which includes forgetting your own particular identity in everyday life, what she calls the “potential invis-

bility of Jews.” “The terms German and Jews would have to be reconceived as multifarious, overlapping and potentially invisible” (128).

12. [www.berlin.de/berlin-im-ueberblick/geschichte/index.en.html](http://www.berlin.de/berlin-im-ueberblick/geschichte/index.en.html).

13. Christian Härtel, *Berlin: A Short History* (Berlin: Auflag, 2006), 12. One should mention that although the Huguenots were given asylum and became part of Berlin's elite, very few Jews were allowed to settle in Berlin limitation-free prior to 1815.

14. [www.berlin.de/berlin-im-ueberblick/geschichte/index.en.html](http://www.berlin.de/berlin-im-ueberblick/geschichte/index.en.html).

15. Härtel, *Berlin: A Short History*, 14.

16. Brandon Hamber and Hugo van der Merwe, “What Is This Thing Called Reconciliation?” (1998), [www.csvr.org.za/wits/articles/artrcbh.htm](http://www.csvr.org.za/wits/articles/artrcbh.htm).

17. <http://pleite.wordpress.com/2006/06/07/berliner-schnauze/>.

18. [www.potsdamerplatz.de/en/history.html](http://www.potsdamerplatz.de/en/history.html).

19. For photographs and a good essay, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ampelm%C3%A4nnchen>.

20. [www.potsdamerplatz.de/en/architecture.html](http://www.potsdamerplatz.de/en/architecture.html).

21. Photo: [www.potsdamerplatz.de/en/architecture/construction\\_time.html](http://www.potsdamerplatz.de/en/architecture/construction_time.html).

22. Continuous change characterizes Berlin. Christian Härtel writes: “Berlin's most defining quality is its ability to keep changing. It has always retained something provisional about it, including the waste-land and problems with transport links which resulted from war damage and the years of division. Even if in the 1990s construction work was started to heal these wounds in the city landscape and whole new districts, such as the area around Potsdamer Platz, have been created, there will always be corners of the city where something new is emerging and where there are new discoveries to be made. In the final analysis this is what makes Berlin such a fascinating city for both its visitors and its people.” See Härtel, *Berlin: A Short History*, 5.

23. [www.potsdamerplatz.de/en/ecology.html](http://www.potsdamerplatz.de/en/ecology.html).

24. Jiang and Daniel immediately saw the contrast with how the Chinese government is dealing with June 4. (See the chapter on Beijing.) Were there other considerations? Did the workers have a clear idea of what freedom means? Could the demonstrators have compromised earlier in a way that could have avoided harsh treatment? These are the kinds of questions debated about the spring 1989 democracy movement in China.

25. Perhaps a counterexample is the monument at Gleis (track) 17, Gruenwald Station. Avner visited the place by train on a different visit to Berlin. From here, fifty thousand Jews were deported to the concentration camps, mainly to Theresienstadt and Auschwitz. The monument, built in 1991, is very simple, with very little text. The visitor walks on the platform and reads the signs. Each sign mentions the date, the number of Jews deported, and the destination. One shivers with the sense of how systematic and cold-blooded this operation was.

26. Thomas McCarthy argues that a rather distorted notion of the history of slavery and what really happened in the past to African Americans has prevented many white Americans from acknowledging the historical injustices of slavery. He writes, “Generally Americans believe that slavery was a Southern phenomenon, date it from the antebellum

period, and do not think of it as central to the American story.” See McCarthy, “*Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in the USA: On the Politics of the Memory of Slavery,” *Political Theory* 30 (2002): 623–48. It seems that, similarly, Holocaust denial must be an obstacle to Berliners in coming to terms with the past because it establishes a divided memory.

27. See photo: [www.travelpod.com/travel-photo/nelson\\_courts/nels\\_and\\_courts/1185184260/p1000507.jpg/tpod.html](http://www.travelpod.com/travel-photo/nelson_courts/nels_and_courts/1185184260/p1000507.jpg/tpod.html).

28. Thomas Michael Kruger, *Akademie der Künste* (Berlin: Stadtwandel Verlag, 2005), 2–3.

29. Michael Imhof and Leon Krempel, *Berlin: New Architecture* (Berlin: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2008), 48. For photos, see: [http://images.google.co.il/imgres?imgurl=http://farm2.static.flickr.com/1179/584915069\\_17f146b1b6.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.flickr.com/photos/sampanalbum/584915069/&usq=\\_\\_LVlbcpxZjTTCWONVY\\_7iw3k\\_Ju4=&h=500&w=375&sz=111&hl=iw&start=1&sig2=p86s0OYSkJzk6OlNn0lyDQ&um=1&tbnid=senadjEEq6vwMM:&tbnh=130&tbnw=98&ei=ZLeqSfOfO4uk0QW\\_spC0Ag&prev=/images%3Fq%3D%2527Akademie%2BDer%2BKunste%2527%26um%3D1%26hl%3Diw%26sa%3DN](http://images.google.co.il/imgres?imgurl=http://farm2.static.flickr.com/1179/584915069_17f146b1b6.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.flickr.com/photos/sampanalbum/584915069/&usq=__LVlbcpxZjTTCWONVY_7iw3k_Ju4=&h=500&w=375&sz=111&hl=iw&start=1&sig2=p86s0OYSkJzk6OlNn0lyDQ&um=1&tbnid=senadjEEq6vwMM:&tbnh=130&tbnw=98&ei=ZLeqSfOfO4uk0QW_spC0Ag&prev=/images%3Fq%3D%2527Akademie%2BDer%2BKunste%2527%26um%3D1%26hl%3Diw%26sa%3DN).

30. Quoted in Hanna Labrenz-Weiss “Stasi at Humboldt University,” in *Berlin in Focus: Cultural Transformations in Germany*, ed. Barbara Becker-Cantarino (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 51.

31. Matt Erlin, *Berlin's Forgotten Future: City, History, and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 132–33.

32. *Ibid.*, 141, 144.

33. See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnYXbj\\_bcLc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnYXbj_bcLc); or [www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DQAUt1eIMk&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DQAUt1eIMk&feature=related).

34. T. H. Elkins and B. Hofmeister, *Berlin—The Spatial Structure of a Divided City* (London: Methuen, 1988), 69.

35. Of course, Israelis and Palestinians cannot cross into each other's territories the way foreigners can, at least not without a permit, and many wouldn't dare to do it, even if they had one.

36. Rolf Schneider, *The Jewish Museum Berlin* (Berlin: Stadtwandel Verlag, 2001), 6. This is actually an official Berlin Tourism publication.

37. [www.nytimes.com/2009/05/02/arts/design/02conn.html?hpw](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/02/arts/design/02conn.html?hpw).

38. See Ronald Taylor, *Berlin and Its Culture: A Historical Portrait* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 262–63.

39. Hartmut Häussermann, a prominent sociologist and Berliner, claims that in post-reunification Berlin, ethnic segregation is reinforced by spatial segregation (of migrant populations). He writes about the danger of “spatial residualization of the poor and of the socially and economically marginalized, as well as the danger of social exclusion in a fragmented city.” See Häussermann, “Berlin: From Divided into Fragmented City,” *Greek Review of Social Research* 113 (2004): 25–61.

40. The book was written by Wilhelm Busch. You can read the English version here: [www.gutenberg.org/etext/17161](http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/17161).

41. For an interesting essay about humor and coming to terms with the past, see [www.nytimes.com/2008/09/08/arts/design/08szyk.html?n=Top/Features/Arts/Columns/Abroad](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/08/arts/design/08szyk.html?n=Top/Features/Arts/Columns/Abroad).
42. Labrenz-Weiss, "Stasi at Humboldt University," 52. She suspects that the actual percentage was higher (61).
43. Still, it seems the Stasi had six weeks to destroy many files, which created a pervasive atmosphere of suspicion.
44. [www.groups.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/~history/Societies/Berlin.html](http://www.groups.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/~history/Societies/Berlin.html).
45. Timothy Garton Ash, *The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe* (New York: Random House, 1989), 8.
46. Timothy Garton Ash, "The Stasi on Our Minds," *New York Review of Books*, 31 May 2007, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/20210>.
47. [www1.messe-berlin.de/vip8\\_1/website/Internet/Internet/www.art-forum-berlin/englisch/index.html](http://www1.messe-berlin.de/vip8_1/website/Internet/Internet/www.art-forum-berlin/englisch/index.html).
48. Härtel, *Berlin: A Short History*, 69.
49. [www.net4.com/berlin/strandbad-mitte/english.html](http://www.net4.com/berlin/strandbad-mitte/english.html).
50. That Wowereit is the mayor is itself a reflection of tolerance: he is gay. This declaration must be put in historical context. Contemporary Berlin is not rich compared to Munich and Frankfurt. Yet this was not always the case. During the Second Reich, Berlin overtook Frankfurt as the principal banking center and was a financial center. See Elkins and Hofmeister, *Berlin*, 18.
51. Taylor, *Berlin and Its Culture*, 270.
52. [www.sonyclassics.com/thelivesofothers/swf/index.html](http://www.sonyclassics.com/thelivesofothers/swf/index.html).
53. Scholars of Berlin's postwar film industry also find it astonishing that the industry continued to act as if nothing had happened. Wolfgang Schivelbusch writes: "The general collapse in the spring of 1945, which impacted all branches of Berlin's industry and culture, seemed to strangely pass over the film industry. Perhaps it had to do with the old escapist tendency of the film medium itself." See Schivelbusch, *In a Cold Crater: Cultural and Intellectual Life in Berlin, 1945–1948*, trans. Kelly Barry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 127.
54. Häussermann, "Berlin: From Divided into Fragmented City."
55. You can watch the film on YouTube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcnEDTnyC7g&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcnEDTnyC7g&feature=related).
56. [www.berlin.de/berlin-im-ueberblick/geschichte/index.en.html](http://www.berlin.de/berlin-im-ueberblick/geschichte/index.en.html). Some of Liebermann's amazing works that were saved can be seen now in the Old National Gallery in Berlin.
57. Though Hegel's thought can be interpreted as less liberal and perhaps leading to intolerance. Ronald Taylor argues that Hegel's belief in the unity of reality and rationality and his idea that freedom does not necessarily consist of doing what one wants, but rather "seeking one's role within the wholeness of the community—the state" helped to shape more authoritarian times in Berlin. See Taylor, *Berlin and Its Culture*, 115–16. One can, however, doubt that this is the right interpretation of Hegel's notion of freedom. See Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 1972); Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); and Alan Patten, *Hegel's Idea of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

58. Poster designer: Neville Brody, 2008, [www.researchstudios.com](http://www.researchstudios.com). It is part of the embedded art exhibition. The poster can be seen at [www.creativereview.co.uk/crblog/embedded-art/](http://www.creativereview.co.uk/crblog/embedded-art/).

## PARIS

1. Godard himself fell prey to Maoist delusions that were immortalized in his film *La Chinoise*. Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 114–17.

2. Or the Norman rulers of England, depending on one's perspective.

3. This account of early Paris history draws on Chris Jones, "Paris: Pinnacle of Gothic Architecture," in *The Great Cities in History*, ed. John Julius Norwich (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 120–24.

4. [http://classclit.about.com/cs/articles/a/aa\\_abelard.htm](http://classclit.about.com/cs/articles/a/aa_abelard.htm).

5. Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris, 1482* (Paris: Pocket, 1998) (orig. published in 1832), 154–55. Unless otherwise indicated, all French passages in this chapter are translated by Daniel Bell.

6. *Ibid.*, 170.

7. Jean Favier, *Paris: Deux mille ans d'histoire* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), 214, 275, 685, 570, 215.

8. Quoted in Shelley Rice, *Parisian Views* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 9.

9. Bernard Marchand, *Paris, histoire d'une ville, XIXe–XXe siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 1993), 29.

10. Favier, *Paris*, 220.

11. James H. S. McGregor, *Paris from the Ground Up* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 236–37.

12. In Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, "Dossier historique et littéraire," xxvii (orig. pub. in 1825).

13. This paragraph draws on Philip Mansel, "Paris in the Time of Napoleon III and Baron Haussmann," in *The Great Cities in History*, 226–28.

14. Favier, *Paris*, 209.

15. *Ibid.*, 220–21.

16. Quoted in Walter Benjamin, *Écrits français* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), 304.

17. Marchand, *Paris, histoire d'une ville*, 93–95.

18. The line from the *Analects* of Confucius (13.23) that "exemplary persons should seek harmony rather than uniformity" (whereas "petty persons" do the opposite) is well known to most Chinese intellectuals. The ideal is usually illustrated with metaphors of musical instruments that produce a beautiful harmonious sound or dishes composed of ingredients such as salt that taste bland when eaten alone but are delicious when mixed

together. Haussmann's urban design is perhaps the best architectural instantiation of this ideal. Although French thinkers such as Voltaire had idealized Confucian values, we do not know of any evidence that Haussmann was directly influenced by them.

19. Marchand, *Paris, histoire d'une ville*, 90.

20. Benjamin, *Écrits français*, 304. In French, the word for "suburb"—*banlieue*—can be taken to mean "the place where one is banished" (*lieu du ban*).

21. *Ibid.*, 304–5.

22. <http://dl.lib.brown.edu/ baudelaire/fleursdumal5.html>.

23. The first part of the quotation is from Caroline Weber, "A Tower at Its Moment in History," *International Herald Tribune*, 30–31 May 2009, 20; the second part is from McGregor, *Paris from the Ground Up*, 259.

24. The pleasures of strolling along Haussmann's boulevards were not always immediately apparent. An elderly character from a play by Victorien Sardou in 1866 complains that "Nowadays, for the least excursions, there are miles to go! . . . An eternal sidewalk going on and on forever!" Quoted in Edmund White, *The Flâneur: A Stroll through the Paradoxes of Paris* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2001), 38.

25. Simon Texier, *Paris contemporain* (Paris: Parigramme, 2005), 10.

26. In Rome, by contrast, the men tend to be more fashionable: they "look like peacocks," in the words of a female friend from New York.

27. See Peter Brooks, *Henry James Goes to Paris* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

28. Quoted in Daniel Noin and Paul White, *Paris* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1997), 1.

29. See J. Gerald Kennedy, *Imagining Paris: Exile, Writing, and American Identity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

30. [www.frugalfun.com/hemingwayparis.html](http://www.frugalfun.com/hemingwayparis.html). For a book-length anthology of the perceptions of Americans in Paris, see Adam Gopnik, ed., *Americans in Paris: A Literary Anthology* (New York: Library of America, 2004). In his introduction, Gopnik argues, "For two centuries, Paris has been attached for Americans to an idea of happiness. . . . It is the place where we go to escape small-town, or even big-town, American life and be happy. The Parisian idea is also an idea of happiness divorced, perhaps, from any idea of virtue, or even of freedom. . . . If there is within this history of imagination also a history of pretenses, or illusions, it is still a history of love, which is always an illusion of a kind" (Gopnik, *Americans in Paris*, xiii, xxxiii).

31. Hollywood film directors were not unconscious of what they were doing: as Ernst Lubitsch (1892–1947), one of the most distinguished directors of his time, put it: "There is Paramount Paris and Metro Paris and of course the real Paris. Paramount's is the most Parisian of all." <http://photos.state.gov/libraries/france/45994/irc/films.pdf>.

32. [www.museumofhoaxes.com/hoax/photo\\_database/image/the\\_kiss\\_at\\_city\\_hall](http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/hoax/photo_database/image/the_kiss_at_city_hall).

33. Favier, *Paris*, 541–42.

34. It is hard to believe that Paris was the top financial center of the world in the early twentieth century (Favier, *Paris*, 529–30).

35. Scott Sayare and Maia de la Baume, "Paris Journal: Revelers See a Dimming in a

Capital's Night Life," *New York Times*, 11 January 2010. Parisians have recently launched a petition to rejuvenate Parisian nights: [www.yagg.com/2009/10/28/video-lancement-dune-petition-pour-sauver-la-nuit-a-paris](http://www.yagg.com/2009/10/28/video-lancement-dune-petition-pour-sauver-la-nuit-a-paris).

36. White, *The Flâneur*, 22.

37. The English word *romantic*—and its meaning of sentimental love—is foreign to the point that the Hollywood-style connotations may not even be understood by Parisians. A Parisian academic friend told Daniel that he came to understand the Anglophone sense of the word only when he entered a restaurant with an American friend who looked at the candles and exclaimed, "Isn't it romantic?"

38. One key difference between the ideal of "nonpasteurized romance" and the English ideal of the eccentric is that the former must challenge conventional ways of doing things with a certain flair, if not flamboyance; understatement and lack of self-consciousness about social deviance is not valued.

39. Favier, *Paris*, 125.

40. Albert Joseph George argues that the promotion of the novel by French romantics in the 1830s can be at least partly explained by the upheavals of the Industrial Revolution: writers faced a mass audience without benefit of patrons, and prose was the best medium of communicating their thoughts to the vast new audience that modern technology had provided. George, *The Development of French Romanticism* (Bruges: Syracuse University Press, 1955), chap. 10.

41. Quoted in D. G. Charlton, "The French Romantic Movement," in *The French Romantics*, ed. D. G. Charlton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 15.

42. Charles Baudelaire, *Le spleen de Paris: Petits poèmes en prose* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), 166, 190.

43. See Jean-Benoît Nadeau and Julie Barlow, *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2003), 172–73, 259; and Don Morrison, "In Search of Lost Time," *Time*, 21 November 2007. Such policies are applied to the whole nation, but they tend to favor (and are primarily driven by) the interests of Parisians, who partake more of "high culture" than the rest of France: see the section "Romance versus Morality" in this chapter.

44. Nadeau and Barlow, *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong*, 18, 237.

45. Noin and White, *Paris*, 235.

46. Nadeau and Barlow, *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong*, 23.

47. See the chapter on Oxford. In Oxford, academics often end an assertion with a question mark (e.g., "Isn't it?"), as if the aim is to reach an agreement or mutual understanding.

48. Benedetta Craveri, *The Age of Conversation*, trans. Teresa Waugh (New York: New York Review of Books, 2005), ix–xi.

49. Quoted in *ibid.*, 256.

50. Quoted in *ibid.*, 344.

51. Quoted in *ibid.*, 329.

52. Hippolyte Taine, *Les Origines de la France contemporaine* (quoted in *ibid.*, 375).

53. One French term still used today clearly owes its origins to the aristocratic salons of the ancien régime: the expression *esprit de l'escalier* ("spirit of the stairs") refers to

thinking of a clever or witty comment when it's too late, after one has left the scene of an encounter. The origin of the term comes from a sentence in Denis Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, where a character thinks clearly only at the bottom of the stairs leading from the reception rooms of the "noble storey," the upper floor of aristocratic mansions where salons were held ([www.worldwidewords.org/qa/qa-esp1.htm](http://www.worldwidewords.org/qa/qa-esp1.htm)).

54. Quoted in Craveri, *The Age of Conversation*, 372.

55. Quoted in *ibid.*, 337.

56. Quoted in *ibid.*, 372.

57. Nadeau and Barlow, *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong*, 63–64.

58. It was, Daniel is sad to report, a final goodbye: Odile passed away the following year.

59. See [www.senat.fr/cra/s20090205/s20090205\\_4.html#par\\_516](http://www.senat.fr/cra/s20090205/s20090205_4.html#par_516).

60. See the chapter on Jerusalem.

61. Favier, *Paris*, 414, 406.

62. Quoted in Henry Peyre, *Qu'est-ce que le Romanticisme?* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), 96.

63. Favier, *Paris*, 898.

64. The radical publisher Eric Hazan, who still sees Paris as divided between "bad" bourgeois and "good" working-class neighborhoods, notes that "the political division of Paris goes back a long way. In the nineteenth century, between the anonymous night-time barricades of November 1827 and the seventy sunny days of the Commune, the list of demonstrations, riots, coups, uprisings and insurrections is so long that no other capital can claim anything similar." Hazan, "Faces of Paris," trans. David Fernbach, *New Left Review* 62 (March/April 2010): 35–36.

65. Nadeau and Baleau, *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong*, 53.

66. *Ibid.*, 234–35.

67. Not surprisingly, the deconstructionist movement emerged in Paris.

68. McGregor, *Paris from the Ground Up*, 281–85. High-class restaurants in Paris were often started by chefs who had served the aristocracy in private settings before the Revolution.

69. Jones, "Paris," in *The Great Cities in History*, 123.

70. Favier, *Paris*, 57–62, 532–33.

71. Guy de Maupassant, *Bel-Ami* (Paris: G. F. Flammarion, 2008), 98.

72. It is worth reemphasizing that such prejudices were not confined to Paris. Karl Marx, notwithstanding his own Jewish heritage, voiced similar views about the "practical Jewish spirit" of "huckstering" in his essay "On the Jewish Question."

73. Marchand, *Paris*, 267.

74. Ian Buruma, "Occupied Paris: The Sweet and the Cruel," *New York Review of Books*, 7 December 2009. Von Choltitz himself was not implicated in these killings: he did not become the military governor of Paris until August 1944. As a commander in Russia, however, he faithfully executed orders to liquidate Jews. Sonke Neitzel, ed., *Tapping Hitler's Generals: Transcripts of Secret Conversations, 1942–1945* (London: Frontline, 2007).

75. Noin and White, *Paris*, 8.



76. Maupassant, "Dossier 3," in *Bel-Ami*, 404–6. Maupassant's sentiments may have been the expression of a pan-European fin de siècle sentiment that viewed bourgeois culture as nothing but decline and deterioration, death and not vitality, compromise rather than truth, and the ethics of manners rather than the ethics of the hero, but Paris was certainly a center of such sentiments.

77. Nadeau and Barlow, *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong*, 39.

78. There have been attempts to promote decentralization of late, but the country is still far more centralized than most countries in Western Europe.

79. Noin and White, *Paris*, 235, 245.

80. Favier, *Paris*, 890, 896.

81. Luc Sante, "In Search of Lost Paris," *New York Review of Books*, 23 December 2010, 54.

82. Noin and White, *Paris*, 8.

83. *Ibid.*, 224.

84. McGregor, *Paris from the Ground Up*, 293–97.

85. See articles by Nicolai Ouroussoff: "Remaking Paris," *New York Times*, 14 June 2009; "A New Paris, as Dreamed by Planners," *New York Times*, 17 March 2009. For official websites on the plans, see [www.gouvernement.fr/gouvernement/presentation-du-projet-pour-le-grand-paris](http://www.gouvernement.fr/gouvernement/presentation-du-projet-pour-le-grand-paris).

#### NEW YORK

1. Rudolph Giuliani, "The Second Inaugural Address: The Agenda for Permanent Change (1998)," in *Empire City: New York through the Centuries*, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson and David S. Dunbar (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 917, 914, 916.

2. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Modern Library, 1993; orig. pub. 1961).

3. Quoting Eric Sanderson, a landscape ecologist at the Bronx Zoo and curator of the exhibit Mannahatta at the Museum of the City of New York. "Podcast: Mannahatta, Past, Present, and Future," *New York Times (NYT)*, 22 January 2009.

4. Jackson and Dunbar, *Empire City*, 18.

5. *Ibid.*, 21, 103.

6. Quoted in Edward Rothstein, "Manhattan: An Island Always Diverse," *NYT*, 4 July 2009.

7. John Lambert, "Travels through Canada and the United States of North America in the Years 1806, 1807, 1808," in *Empire City*, 111.

8. Calvin Tomkins, "The Desirability of Comprehensive Municipal Planning in Advance of Development (1905)," in *Empire City*, 465.

9. James Robertson, "A Few Months in America: Containing Remarks on Some of Its Industrial and Commercial Interests (1854)," in *Empire City*, 228–32.

10. Jackson and Dunbar, *Empire City*, 530.

11. Michelle Nevius and James Nevius, *Inside the Apple: A Streetwise History of New York City* (New York: Free Press, 2009), 266.

12. Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 19.

13. See the chapter on Paris.

14. Nevius and Nevius, *Inside the Apple*, 175. Manhattan, as the original “New York,” continues to dominate accounts of the “story of New York.” For example, Eric Homberger’s book *New York City: A Cultural History* (Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 2008) ends with a four-page section titled “More than Manhattan.” John Tierney argues that Brooklyn would have been better off had it remained an independent city. Tierney, “Brooklyn Could Have Been a Contender,” *NYT*, 28 December 1997, reprinted in *Empire City*, 407–21.

15. Caro, *The Power Broker*, 323.

16. Philip Kennicott, “A Builder Who Went to Town,” *Washington Post*, 11 March 2007.

17. Anthony Flint, *Wrestling with Moses: How Jane Jacobs Took on New York’s Master Builder and Transformed the American City* (New York: Random House, 2009), xv–xvi.

18. Quoted in *ibid.*, 44.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Caro, *The Power Broker*, 9.

21. Nathan Glazer, *From a Cause to a Style: Modernist Architecture’s Encounter with the American City* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 214.

22. Flint, *Wrestling with Moses*, 189–90.

23. Caro, *The Power Broker*, 20.

24. Robert Moses, “Remarks on the Groundbreaking at Lincoln Square (1959),” in *Empire City*, 737.

25. Flint, *Wrestling with Moses*, 54–55.

26. *Ibid.*, 192, 183.

27. Bell the elder actually faxed a four-page C.V., “which mentions the books I have done but omits the many, many hundreds of articles I have written, a number somewhat deceptive since in my youth, as a managing editor of a social democratic weekly, *The New Leader*, at a tender age, I wrote (according to a count by a grad student), over 250 articles in five years, understandable, if you figure one a week.” Bell the younger realized he could never compete on that front, so he calculated how many years it would take to match Bell the elder’s book total. Bell the elder replied that it’s not just about quantity, adding that two of his books had been chosen by the *Times Literary Supplement* as among the 100 most influential books since the Second World War.

28. I regret to report the sad news that Daniel Bell passed away on 25 January 2011.

29. Quoted in Francois Weil, *A History of New York*, trans. Jody Gladding (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 55.

30. Extract from Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, reprinted in Eric Homberger, *New York City*, 4.

31. Weil, *A History of New York*, 115.

32. Jackson and Dunbar, *Empire City*, 258–59.

33. Nevius and Nevius, *Inside the Apple*, 154, 160.

34. E. B. White, "Here Is New York (1949)," in *Empire City*, 698–99. White was referring not only to foreign immigrants, but also to Americans from other parts of the United States who embrace "New York with the intense excitement of first love" (*ibid.*).

35. Homberger, *New York City*, 65.

36. *Ibid.*, 67.

37. Nevius and Nevius, *Inside the Apple*, 116; Homberger, *New York City*, 39.

38. Quoted in Jackson and Dunbar, *Empire City*, 690.

39. Jim Sleeper, "Boodling, Bigotry, and Cosmopolitanism: The Transformation of a Civic Culture," *Dissent* (fall 1987), reprinted in *Empire City*, 852.

40. New York is the most linguistically diverse city in the world, and some endangered tongues are now more commonly heard in New York than anywhere else. Sam Roberts, "Listening to (and Saving) the World's Languages," *NYT*, 28 April 2010.

41. For a book-length argument that New York's musical creativity is largely explained by the fact that different communities jostle together there, spilling aesthetics on one another, see Tony Fletcher, *All Hopped Up and Ready to Go: Music from the Streets of New York, 1927–77* (New York: Norton, 2009).

42. See Weil, *A History of New York*, 299–301. Feminism had earlier roots in Europe and perhaps elsewhere, but New York became the center of the movement after the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963.

43. To be more precise, wealth is not a necessary condition for the creation of innovative art forms so long as people's basic material needs are secure. Hip-hop and rap emerged from New York's poorest neighborhoods in the 1970s, during the city's moment of greatest misery and anguish. But the musical innovators still partook of New York's ethos of ambition, which helps to explain why "a whole generation of kids from America's worst neighborhoods broke out of poverty, violence, and ghetto isolation, and became sophisticated New Yorkers with horizons as wide as the world" (Marshall Ber- man, "New York Calling," *Dissent*, fall 2007).

44. Joel Kotkin argues that the diversity that once seemed so unique to New York will be mirrored all over the United States, and that the nation's "demographic vitality"—driven by a continuing influx of immigrants as well as high birthrates—will make the United States not only bigger but better when the population passes four hundred million before midcentury. Kotkin, *The Next Hundred Million: America in 2050* (New York: Penguin, 2010).

45. This paragraph and italicized accounts of Avner's impressions of New York are adapted from his essay "Philosophy Gone Urban: Reflections on Urban Restoration," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 34 (spring 2003): 6–27.

46. James L. Kugel casts doubt on the mainstream interpretation: "This tale appears to be a deliberate jab at sophisticated Babylonian society, and along with that, an etiological explanation of the similarity-yet-distinctness of the Semitic languages." Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 88. Either way, however, God seems to be expressing his displeasure at sophisticated city life.

47. William Chapman Sharpe, *New York Nocturne: The City after Dark in Literature, Painting, and Photography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 19.
48. David Nye, "The Geometrical Sublime: The Skyscraper," in *City and Nature*, ed. Thomas Moller Kristensen et al. (Odense, Denmark: Odense University Press, 1994), 33.
49. He did object, however, that "the skyscrapers are too small" for his taste. Le Corbusier, "The Fairy Catastrophe, from *When the Cathedrals Were White* (1936)," in *Empire City*, 618, 614.
50. Nevius and Nevius, *Inside the Apple*, 215.
51. *Ibid.*, 239.
52. Quoted in Homberger, *New York City*, 57.
53. The architecture critic Paul Goldberger, quoted in Nevius and Nevius, *Inside the Apple*, 277.
54. Quoted in [www.perspectives.com/blog/archives/000240.htm](http://www.perspectives.com/blog/archives/000240.htm). See the chapter on Jerusalem for more examples of how religion can degenerate into hatred of the other.
55. Quoted in Jackson and Dunbar, *Empire City*, 6.
56. The commissioners' plan is quoted in Homberger, *New York City*, 28.
57. The commissioners' plan is quoted in Jean Schopfer, "The Plan of a City (1902)," in *Empire City*, 438.
58. *Ibid.*, 437.
59. Homberger, *New York City*, 27.
60. Nevius and Nevius, *Inside the Apple*, xv, 46.
61. Glazer, *From a Cause to a Style*, 222.
62. As one might expect in a city of ambition, most pedestrians are busy with something, which helps to explain why New Yorkers walk faster than most other Americans (Jackson and Dunbar, "Introduction," in *Empire City*, 1). So if strolling refers to a kind of aimless and carefree slow-paced walking, then most New Yorkers are not strollers, even if it's true that the city is best experienced by strolling.
63. Cynthia Ozick, "The Synthetic Sublime, from *Quarrel and Quandary* (2000)," in *Empire City*, 959.
64. Conversation with Daniel.
65. Leonard Cohen, "Don't Pass Me By," from the record album *Live Songs* (Columbia, 1973; producer: Bob Johnson).
66. Nevius and Nevius, *Inside the Apple*, 13.
67. Homberger, *New York City*, xi.
68. Nevius and Nevius, *Inside the Apple*, 61.
69. Homberger, *New York City*, 8–9.
70. Nevius and Nevius, *Inside the Apple*, 113–14.
71. The previous two paragraphs draw on Homberger, *New York City*, 223–41.
72. Sam Roberts, "No Longer Majority Black, Harlem Is in Transition," *NYT*, 6 January 2010.
73. Joseph O'Neill, *Netherland* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2008), 51, 53.

74. "They" refers mainly to New Yorkers in the world of business. Woody Allen is a famous counterexample from the world of art: he has succeeded by appearing uncertain and tentative.

75. F. Scott Fitzgerald, "My Lost City, from *The Crack Up* (1936)," in *Empire City*, 610.

76. Quoted in Homberger, *New York City*, 56.

77. Frank Rich, "The Other Plot to Wreck America," *NYT*, 10 January 2010.

78. Andrew Ross Sorkin, *Too Big to Fail: Inside the Battle to Save Wall Street* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), 6, 7, 538–39.

79. Ozick, "The Synthetic Sublime," 947.

80. Leonard Cohen, "I Wonder How Many People in This City," in *The Spice-Box of Earth* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961).

81. Jennifer Senior, "Alone Together," *New York*, 23 November 2008.

82. *Ibid.*

83. John Steinbeck, "The Making of a New Yorker (1943)," in *Empire City*, 672.

84. Flint, *Wrestling with Moses*, 63.

85. Quoted in *ibid.*, 84.

86. Quoted in *ibid.*, 87.

87. Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 511.

88. Sam Hall Kaplan, "Review of *Wrestling with Moses*," *The Planning Report*, September 2009. Manhattan as a whole may have been too successful for its own good: in 2007 it ranked first among the nation's counties for inequality (in 1980, it had ranked seventeenth). Joel Kotkin, "Urban Plight: Vanishing Upward Mobility," *The American*, 31 August 2010.

89. Jackson and Dunbar, *Empire City*, 788–89.

90. *Ibid.*, 173.

91. Quoted in Nevius and Nevius, *Inside the Apple*, 86, 105.

92. Quoted in Jackson and Dunbar, *Empire City*, 9.

93. *Ibid.*, 511, 516.

94. Nevius and Nevius, *Inside the Apple*, 253.

95. Ozick, "The Synthetic Sublime," 959.

96. Homberger, *New York City*, xvi.

97. John P. Avlon, "The Resilient City (2001)," in *Empire City*, 971,

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