

# READING THE WORLD

I D E A S  
T H A T M A T T E R

SECOND EDITION

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This image painted on an ancient Greek *kylix*, or drinking cup, is one of the earliest representations of a dedicated educational setting known in any human culture.

HSÜN TZU *Encouraging Learning* 8

To pursue [learning] is to be a man, to give it up is to become a beast.

SENECA *On Liberal and Vocational Studies* 16

I have no respect for any study whatsoever if its end is the making of money. Such studies are to me unworthy ones. They involve the putting out of skills to hire, and are only of value in so far as they may develop the mind without occupying it for long.

AL-GHAZĀLĪ *Manners to Be Observed by Teachers and Students* 24

A teacher is like a stamp to clay and a student is like clay. If the stamp has no character, there is no impression on clay.

□ Pages from *New England Primer* 32

My Book and Heart / Must never part.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT *On National Education* 35

I have already inveighed against the custom of confining girls to their needle, and shutting them out from all political and civil employments; for by thus narrowing their minds they are rendered unfit to fulfill the peculiar duties which nature has assigned them.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS *Learning to Read* 46

I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy.

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN *from Knowledge Its Own End* 53

Knowledge is capable of being its own end. Such is the constitution of the human mind, that any kind of knowledge, if it be really such, is its own reward.

PAULO FREIRE *The Banking Concept of Education* 62

If it is true that thought has meaning only when generated by action upon the world, the subordination of students to teachers becomes impossible.

RICHARD FEYNMAN *O Americano Outra Vez* 68

After a lot of investigation, I finally figured out that the students had memorized everything, but they didn't know what anything meant.

KISAUTAQ LEONA OKAKOK *Serving the Purpose of Education* 76

To me, educating a child means equipping him or her with the capability to succeed in the world he or she will live in. In our Inupiat communities, this means learning not only academics, but also to travel, camp, and harvest wildlife resources in the surrounding land and sea environments.

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A cave painting from 15,000–13,000 BCE depicts a human figure with a birdlike head.

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The tendency of man's nature to good is like the tendency of water to flow downwards.

HSÜN TZU *Man's Nature Is Evil* 100

Man's nature is evil; goodness is the result of conscious activity.

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"I am not, I will not be,  
I have not, I will not have,"  
That frightens all children  
And kills fear in the wise.

□ LEONARDO DA VINCI *Vitruvian Man* 116

*Vitruvian Man* is one of the most iconic pictures in the Western world, and a standard image for the generic human being.

THOMAS HOBBES *from Leviathan* 119

... wherein men live without other security than what their own strength. . . . In such condition there is no place for industry . . . no arts, no letters, no society, and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

JOHN LOCKE *Of Ideas* 125

Let us suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas—How comes it to be furnished? . . . Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from experience.

□ *Igbo Mother and Child* 129

A sculpture from the Igbo people of Nigeria depicts a mother nursing her child.

RUTH BENEDICT *The Individual and the Pattern of Culture* 132

No individual can arrive even at the threshold of his potentialities without a culture in which he participates. Conversely, no civilization has in it any element which in the last analysis is not the contribution of an individual.

EDWARD O. WILSON *The Fitness of Human Nature* 144

What is human nature? It is not the genes, which prescribe it, or culture, its ultimate product. Rather, human nature is something else for which we have only begun to find ready expression. It is the epigenetic rules, the hereditary regularities of mental development that bias cultural evolution in one direction as opposed to another, and thus connect the genes to culture.

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This pictorial excerpt from the Egyptian Book of the Dead depicts the judgment of an Egyptian scribe and nobleman named Ani.

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ABU NASR AL-FARABI *Perfect Associations and Perfect Rulers* 170

The heart comes to be first and becomes then the cause of the existence of the other organs and limbs of the body. . . . In the same way the ruler of this city must . . . be the cause of the rise of the city and its parts.

CHRISTINE DE PIZAN from *The Treasure of the City of Ladies* 175

Although the prince may be lord and master of his subjects, the subjects nevertheless make the lord and not the lord the subjects.

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI from *The Prince* 184

Therefore it is unnecessary for a prince to have all of the good qualities I have enumerated, but it is very necessary to appear to have them. And I shall dare to say this also, that to have them and always to observe them is injurious.

LIN TSE-HSÜ *A Letter to Queen Victoria* 193

Suppose there were people from another country who carried opium for sale to England and seduced your people into buying and smoking it; certainly your honorable ruler would deeply hate it and be bitterly aroused. . . . Naturally you would not wish to give unto others what you yourself do not want.

LENI RIEFENSTAHL from *The Triumph of the Will* 199

A still from Riefenstahl's famous film of Nazi propaganda shows a 1935 Nazi political rally.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. *Letter from Birmingham City Jail* 202

We can never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal."

AUNG SAN SUU KYI from *In Quest of Democracy* 219

The root of a nation's misfortunes has to be sought in the moral failings of the government.

DESMOND TUTU *Nuremberg or National Amnesia: A Third Way* 227

To forgive is not just to be altruistic. It is the best form of self-interest. What dehumanizes you inexorably dehumanizes me.

BARACK OBAMA *A More Perfect Union* 238

I have asserted a firm conviction—a conviction rooted in my faith in God and my faith in the American people—that working together we can move beyond some of our old racial wounds, and that in fact we have no choice if we are to continue on the path of a more perfect union.

## 4 WAR AND PEACE 250

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Now all the gentlemen in the world know enough to condemn such acts and brand them as unrighteous. And yet, when it comes to the even greater unrighteousness of offensive warfare against other states, they do not know enough to condemn it.

SUN TZU from *The Art of War* 256

Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril.

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS from *Summa Theologica* 260

Those who wage war justly aim at peace.

□ *The Progress of an Aztec Warrior* 265

An image from a sixteenth-century codex shows the progression of the career of an Aztec warrior-priest in the days before the Spanish conquest.

□ EUGÈNE DELACROIX *Liberty Leading the People* 268

A painting by a nineteenth-century French artist celebrates the French Revolution.

□ PABLO PICASSO *Guernica* 271

A cubist painting portrays the 1937 bombing of a Basque town in northern Spain.

MARGARET MEAD *Warfare: An Invention—Not a Biological Necessity* 274

Warfare is just an invention known to the majority of human societies by which they permit their young men either to accumulate prestige or avenge their honour or acquire loot or wives or slaves or sago lands or cattle or appease the blood lust of their gods or the restless souls of the recently dead.

GEORGE ORWELL *Pacifism and the War* 282

If Mr. Savage and others imagine that one can somehow "overcome" the German army by lying on one's back, let them go on imagining it, but let them also wonder occasionally whether this is not an illusion due to security, too much money and a simple ignorance of the way in which things actually happen.

KENZABURO OE *The Unstomached People* 288

The twentieth century has become afflicted with a cancer—the possession of nuclear weapons by various nations—for which there is no known cure.

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN *What Is a Just War?* 293

The world would have been much better off if the violence of particular regimes had been confronted on the battlefield earlier; fewer lives would have been lost over the long run.

**5 WEALTH, POVERTY, AND SOCIAL CLASS 305**MO TZU *Against Music* 308

If you ask what it is that has caused the ruler to neglect the affairs of government and the humble man to neglect his tasks, the answer is music.

NEW TESTAMENT *Luke, Chapter 16* 315

If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

□ Image

□ WILLIAM HOGARTH *Gin Lane* 320

An eighteenth-century engraving depicts the evils of gin.

THOMAS MALTHUS from *An Essay on the Principle of Population* 324

Impelled to the increase of his species by an equally powerful instinct, reason interrupts his career and asks him whether he may not bring beings into the world for whom he cannot provide the means of subsistence.

MOHANDAS K. GANDHI *Economic and Moral Progress* 332

I venture to think that the scriptures of the world are far safer and sounder treatises on laws of economics than many of the modern textbooks.

DOROTHEA LANGE *Migrant Mother* 341

This iconic image from the Great Depression shows a woman sitting in what appears to be a tent or lean-to. This image, and others like it, have helped to fix the Great Depression in the minds of many who never experienced it.

OCTAVIO PAZ from *The Day of the Dead* 345

The fiesta's function, then, is more utilitarian than we think: waste attracts and promotes wealth, and is an investment like any other, except that the returns on it cannot be measured or counted. What is sought is potency, life, health. In this sense the fiesta, like the gift and the offering, is one of the most ancient of economic forms.

LUCY LAMECK *Africans Are Not Poor* 352

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we have to be a bit careful about the word "poverty," because we will condition the thinking of the people. Our growing schoolchildren, whom we would like to grow in an independent country, should be able to enter the army of the builders of the republic; if we still tell them every day that we are poor, we will be debasing ourselves and debasing our other foundations.

GARRETT HARDIN *Lifeboat Ethics: The Case against Helping the Poor* 357

We cannot remake the past. We cannot safely divide the wealth equitably among all peoples so long as people reproduce at different rates. To do so would guarantee that our grandchildren and everyone else's grandchildren would have only a ruined world to inhabit.

MUHAMMAD YUNUS *The Stool Makers of Jobra Village* 369

My work became a struggle to show that the financial untouchables are actually touchable, even huggable.

## 6 SCIENCE AND NATURE 381

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A drawing of the universe according to the Egyptian scientist Ptolemy shows the sun and other planets revolving around the earth.

1 BEATUS OF LIÉBANA *The Beatus Map* 387

This map of the three known continents—Europe, Asia, and Africa—is taken from an illuminated manuscript created by a medieval monk and copied many times throughout the Middle Ages. The map combines biblical, classical, and contemporary places into a single presentation of the world as post-Roman Christians saw it.

AVERROËS from *On the Harmony of Religions and Philosophy* 391

The knowledge of creation leads to the cognizance of the Creator, through the knowledge of the created. The more perfect becomes the knowledge of creation, the more perfect becomes the knowledge of the Creator.

MOSES MAIMONIDES *The Guide for the Perplexed* 397

We . . . hold that all things in the Universe are the result of design, and not merely of necessity; He who designed them may change them when He changes His designs.

□ JOSEPH WRIGHT OF DERBY *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump* 402

A painting of a science experiment in eighteenth-century England depicts various reactions to the scientific revolution.

CHARLES DARWIN from *Natural Selection; or, the Survival of the Fittest* 405

It may metaphorically be said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinising, throughout the world, the slightest variations; rejecting those that are bad, preserving and adding up all that are good.

RACHEL CARSON *The Obligation to Endure* 419

The history of life on earth has been a history of interaction between living things and their surroundings. . . . Only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species—man—acquired significant power to alter the nature of his world.

DAVID SUZUKI *The Sacred Balance* 427

In every world-view, there is an understanding that everything is connected to everything else, that nothing exists in isolation or alone. People have always understood that we are deeply embedded in and dependent upon the natural world.

MATTHIEU RICARD and TRINH XUAN THUAN

*The Universe in a Grain of Sand* 435

Buddhism sees the world as a vast flow of events that are linked together and participate in one another. The way we perceive this flow crystallizes certain aspects of the nonseparable universe, thus creating an illusion that there are autonomous entities completely separate from us.

□ *Galaxy Cluster Abell 1689* 451

This image from the Hubble Space Telescope shows one of the largest and oldest clusters of galaxies in the universe, containing hundreds of galaxies and more than a trillion stars.

AL GORE *The Climate Emergency* 454

I've come to believe that global warming, the disappearance of the ocean fisheries, the destruction of the rain forests, the stratospheric ozone depletion problem, the extinction crisis, all of these are really symptoms of an underlying cause. The underlying cause is a collision between our civilization and the earth.

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In sum, I say that our city as a whole is a lesson for Greece, and that each of us presents himself as a self-sufficient individual, disposed to the widest possible diversity of actions, with every grace and great versatility.

PLATO *from Gorgias* 478

What is there greater than the word which persuades the judges in all the courts, or the senators in the council, or the citizens in the assembly, or at any other political meeting?

ARISTOTLE *from Rhetoric* 489

And if it be objected that one who uses such power of speech unjustly might do great harm, that is a charge which may be made in common against all good things.

GERTRUDE BUCK *The Present Status of Rhetorical Theory* 496

Both the Platonic and the modern theory of discourse make it not an individualistic and isolate the process for the advantage of the speaker alone, but a real communication between speaker and hearer, to the equal advantage of both, and thus a real function of the social organism.

□ NORMAN ROCKWELL *Freedom of Speech* 503

A painting from World War II-era America depicts a man speaking at a town meeting.

CHINUA ACHEBE *Language and the Destiny of Man* 506

For when language is seriously interfered with, when it is disjoined from truth, be it from mere incompetence or worse, from malice, horrors can descend again on mankind.

## □ Ad for Chinese Population Policy 516

An advertising poster sponsored by the Chinese government in 1980 features a young, happy couple and their child.

N. SCOTT MOMADAY *Personal Reflections* 519

Writing produces a false security where our attitudes toward language are concerned. We take liberties with words; we become blind to their sacred aspects.

## □ Image

GLORIA ANZALDÚA *How to Tame a Wild Tongue* 527

If you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language.

TONI MORRISON *Nobel Lecture* 539

Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge.

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