

# THE EPOCH TIMES LIFE & TRADITION

Our culture often gets beauty all wrong. Friedlander delves deeper, telling stories of transformation from the inside out.

HOW TO  
INSTALL A  
LIFELONG  
**LOVE OF  
LEARNING  
IN KIDS**

**PAGE 10**

HOW TO  
DEAL WITH  
**FINANCIAL  
SCAMS  
TARGETING  
SENIORS**

**PAGE 3**

# Rebecca Friedlander

ON HELPING WOMEN DEFINE 'BEAUTIFUL'

**PAGE 6**



# Teaching Kids About the Free Market

CATHERINE YANG

**Y**es, your 7-year-old is perfectly capable of understanding how the Federal Reserve works.

The Tuttle Twins series is a set of 10 books geared toward children around age 5–11 illustrating various ideas around the free market, economics, and civics. Economics classics like F.A. Hayek's "The Road to Serfdom" and Frédéric Bastiat's 1950 essay, "The Law," get distilled into colorful adventures where the twins Ethan and Emily learn about central planning, entrepreneurship, individual rights, inflation, and even the golden rule, of how we should treat others the way we want to be treated.

And they work.

"Children love stories, and they love exploring the world they're a new part of. When you introduce economic ideas in these contexts, they're enjoyable, helpful, and relevant," says Connor Boyack, the author of the book series. "That's why the Tuttle Twins books have sold over half a million copies in just the past few years, and it's why a thousand families signed up for our new curriculum within the first month."

Boyack is the founder and head of Libertas Institute, an independent nonprofit think tank advancing freedom and policy in Utah.

The project began when his two children were 4 and 6, and Boyack would come home wanting to tell them what he did at work today.

Boyack's team has helped remove redundant policies for small businesses, worked against bills like ones increasing the cost of a government marriage license or creating a government vehicle safety inspection program. The group also creates public awareness campaigns and lawsuits on the behalf of Utahns. They have an 82 percent success rate.

So Boyack took to Amazon.com to look for children's books, hoping there would be something about private property, or individual rights and liberty. He found nothing.

After about two weeks of frustration, he decided to practice what he preaches and tackle the problem in an entrepre-

neurial fashion. He decided to write his own books. He teamed up with illustrator Elijah Stanfield, who also has young children of his own, and the first book was such a hit they decided to create an entire series.

Boyack's son and daughter became beta testers of the series, which hit 10 books this year, and they're not an anomaly in enjoying them.

Parents have been writing in to Boyack for years that they haven't been able to find anything like the Tuttle Twins books, and that not only do their children understand these big topics they're reading about, but they really do enjoy the books and reread them.

"Kids don't see themselves as learning economics—they see themselves becoming more mature by better understanding how the world works. It's a winning combination for my kids, and so many others" as well," Boyack said.

Now, Boyack is turning the series into an economics curriculum for children.

## Translating Big Ideas

Boyack is also the president of nonprofit The Association for Teaching Kids Economics (ATKE), which is developing a curriculum to teach children economics.

Boyack's own interest in economics didn't develop so early.

"I didn't learn anything about economics until college, where I was forced to take Econ 101. The class was insanely boring, and full of graphs and funky terms I didn't care about. I didn't do well in the class," Boyack said.

He's far from alone in this respect, but realized years later that this shouldn't be the case at all.

"This was a tragedy, because as I began learning about economics through self-study several years later, I realized that it's a language through which we can express our interpersonal reactions, and better understand why people act the way they do," he said. "None of this was introduced to me in my earlier years, so I want to make sure that other families can capture this higher vision and give their children a leg up in learning this stuff."

Boyack is constantly asked how he takes these complex-sounding topics—some of which parents might feel they don't understand well enough to teach themselves—and turns them into palatable and engaging stories where even children can understand the concepts. Parents, and older siblings, often learn along with them, because these topics aren't touched on in most schools at all.

"The word 'economics' sounds pretty boring, but in reality it's super fascinating because it explains how the world works and how people interact with one another through the market—buying, selling, exchanging, each of us pursuing our own interests," he said. "Knowing economics can really position you to be successful in life and have a sense of curiosity about the complex and amazing world around us."

Boyack plays to their curiosity, and in a sense "translates" these dense economic texts into one or two ideas and a fun story.

It helps, perhaps, that he is not an economist by training.

"I'm not a scholar, I'm not a lawyer, I'm not an economist. I'm just a guy who loves these ideas and has spent a lot of time reading about them," Boyack told podcast host Alan Mosley.

Before Boyack started the Libertas Institute, he'd campaigned for Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) in 2009, and the small

team he worked on helped Lee get his nomination. But he soon realized that on the federal level, for every one win you also net tens or hundreds of losses. The average person makes close to no impact on the federal level, on which the news typically centers.

But if you focus your attention on local and state politics, it's a completely different matter, Boyack found. Not very many people engage in local politics, where there is a low barrier to entry, and it's not hard at all to make your voice heard.

"If everyone watching the news ... spent half of that time getting involved at the local level ... we would see a revolution," Boyack told business coach Jason Stapleton on his podcast.

So in 2011, Boyack started the Libertas Institute. This eventually led to the children's books, then ATKE, and then a podcast "Society and the State." He's also a public speaker, the author of 17 books, and a beekeeper (as the Tuttle family is).

## Free Markets

By focusing efforts on a state level, Boyack has also been able to affect national change. Utah passed the nation's first food truck freedom law (there is also a Tuttle Twins book about the food truck business, based on Henry Hazlitt's "Economics in One Lesson"), and other states have been able to look to Utah.

In advocating for the free market, Boyack has seen that in principle most people support a free market, but in practice interests often butt heads, and when it comes to legislation a lot of regulations really stem from inertia created by lack of understanding.

"People generally like to think that they support free markets, until there's an opportunity to protect their turf or preferred interests," Boyack said. "And that's the biggest challenge—getting people to be consistently supportive of removing government obstacles, even when it might be tempting to throw an obstacle in a competitor's path."

The spike in socialism's popularity in the past few years has been driven by similar motivators: fear, laziness, and lack of understanding.

"What isn't popular about wanting free stuff? It's easy to rally support by promising inexpensive or free goods and services," he said. "But it's disingenuous and evil, because it masks the true costs of these policies and programs, and the reality that everything given to one group of people is forcibly taken from another."

Both of Boyack's nonprofits work to educate, on various levels, from 5-year-olds to policymakers.

"We've learned a lot having published 10 Tuttle Twins books about these ideas, and now we're producing regular content for children of all ages to learn the nuts and bolts about how the economy works, and why it matters to them—even at a young age," Boyack said.

After 10 books, Boyack is setting aside penning new Tuttle Twins books for a while, but he's seen increasing interest from parents, and his children have demonstrated that once they're interested in a topic, one book just isn't enough.

The Tuttle Twins books come with activity workbooks with PDF worksheets for children of different ages, and ATKE now puts out a weekly lesson plan that parents can use to learn and teach various economic ideas. The concepts include scarcity and value, entrepreneurship, wealth creation, and others.

(Below left) The "Tuttle Twins" series teaches children about economics and liberty.

(Below right) Parents have been writing in to Boyack for years that they haven't been able to find anything like the Tuttle Twins books.

# 9 Things to Do When Life Gets You Down

BARBARA DANZA

**L**ife is not easy. Sometimes it's stressful, worrisome, painful, overwhelming, defeating, or just plain hard. Nobody, no matter what their Instagram feed tells you, avoids suffering of one sort or another.

When it feels like too much, when your mind is swirling with negativity, when it seems like you just can't pull yourself together, here are nine simple things you can try to chip away at the gloom.

## Let the Sunshine In

How much time have you been spending indoors, staring at screens? Walk through your home and make sure your shades are open and that you're letting as much sunlight in as possible.

Then, step outside. Feel the sunlight on your face, listen to the sounds all around you, and just soak it in for at least 10 minutes.

## Clean Something

If you look around your space and see chaos, that outer state is definitely contributing to your inner state. Put on some energizing music and, as fast as you can, start putting things away. Set out a couple of bags: one for garbage and one for donations—so that every item either goes back in its place or in one of those two receptacles.

Even if you only have 15 minutes to do this, you'll be surprised at the positive impact you can make. Do this repeatedly over the next few days and you'll begin to enjoy a pace that is welcoming and calm, rather than stressful and chaotic.

## Get Fully Dressed

Take a look in the mirror. Has personal maintenance taken a back seat to your worries? Showing up at your best can have a significant effect on the attitude and energy you bring to any situation. Take an hour to get yourself fully cleaned up, coiffed, and dressed—right down to your shoes.

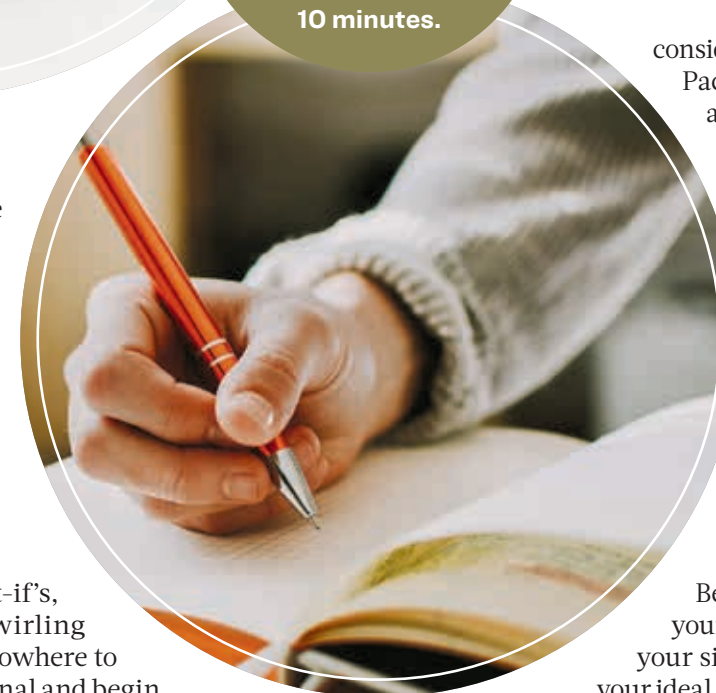
You don't need to get dressed up, necessarily, just dressed in whatever is appropriate for the day at hand. Enjoy the feeling that you're ready for anything.

## Move Your Body

Anyone who exercises regularly knows the counterintuitive truth that exercise gives you energy. Choose a physical activity that is simple and enjoyable, and go do it. A 30-minute walk outside can work wonders.



Step outside. Feel the sunlight on your face, listen to the sounds all around you, and just soak it in for at least 10 minutes.



ALL PHOTOS BY SHURKIN

## Hydrate

Especially when we're busy with all of the things that are overwhelming us, we can easily forget to eat and drink. Make sure you are getting plenty of water each day. For extra enjoyment add a few slices of lemons, limes, or cucumbers.

## Journal

All of your to-do's, what-if's, and other ideas are swirling around your mind with nowhere to land. Sit down with a journal and begin getting these thoughts out of your head and onto paper. Write until you can't write anymore—until you feel like you're totally out of ideas.

No matter how many pages you wind up with, it'll be smaller in scope than what it felt like before.

Your next step—perhaps at another sitting—will be to comb through what you've written and cross out anything you decide to simply let go of. Then, gather everything that you want to hold onto for a "Someday/Maybe" list, as productivity expert David Allen puts it. What's left will be things that you actually need to give your attention to. Choose one and make progress on it.

## Inventory Your Kitchen

What you eat can have a big impact on your mood. If your kitchen is chock-full of carbohydrate-heavy processed foods,

**A 30-minute walk outside can work wonders.**

consider rethinking your grocery list. Pack up those items that aren't really serving you nutritionally for a local food pantry.

Restock, instead, with ingredients high in protein, healthy fats, fiber, and nutrients. Items like meats, greens, whole grains, and fats like olive oil, coconut oil, or avocados will help to reduce drastic highs and lows in blood sugar and keep you from feeling "hangry" over time.

## Dream

Before the day is through, take out your journal again, but this time set your sights on the ideal. What would your ideal life look like? What would bring you spiritual fulfillment? What do you believe you're here for?

Ask yourself the big questions. Enjoy the process of freely writing, doodling, and dreaming.

## Sleep

Aim to regulate your sleep rhythm and get enough sleep each night. Stop looking at digital devices at least an hour before bed. Tidy up, set a cool temperature, read a good book. Establish a bedtime routine that you enjoy and that contributes to your own peace of mind.

We can't avoid suffering in this life, but we can take on the responsibility of giving ourselves the best chance possible at reaching our individual potential. One thing at a time, even the smaller amount of progress can make a big difference. You've got this. Now, get to it.

# How to Deal With Financial Scams Targeting Seniors

**NEW YORK**—If you are seriously ill and homebound, or starting to be prone to forgetfulness, do you have someone you trust with your ATM code to run out and get you some cash?

Are you really sure?

Elder financial abuse runs the gamut from stranger danger to scheming family members to unscrupulous financial advisers. Seniors in the United States are scammed out of some \$37 billion a year, according to a new report by AIG Life and Retirement.

The consequences for older individuals can be dire. One woman currently being sheltered by the Weinberg Center for Elder Justice, a nonprofit in New York that helps abused seniors, lost her house in a "sweetheart scam" in which a stranger preyed upon her loneliness by developing a romantic relationship via online chats. The predator then asked for money.

"It took a long time for her to acknowledge what had happened. She was so ashamed," said Joy Solomon, the director and managing attorney of the Weinberg Center. The first step to protecting seniors is education, experts say. The next move? Put a system of checks and balances in place to make sure that the people you trust to care for you are actually on your side.

In a recent case, AIG's call center

took an order from an 86-year-old client for a large withdrawal. After all the steps to authenticate the transaction, the caller was caught on tape saying something like: "See how easy it is to impersonate my mom?"

An astute AIG representative raised a red flag to the firm's special Elder and Vulnerable Client Care unit, said Michele Kryger, who heads the group.

Banks, financial advisers, and trustworthy family members can help seniors be more secure—without giving up their independence.

Here are some steps to help prevent common forms of elder abuse.

## Practice Good Online Hygiene

It is not just seniors who fall prey to phishing scams, but some common ones target them in particular.

Even so, the AIG survey found that 92 percent of seniors were aware they should not respond to strangers asking for personal information, and 89 percent knew not to click on links from unknown senders.

Getting seniors to develop "digital literacy" is not always easy because it means talking to them about taboo topics like control over money and mental fitness.

Good online hygiene includes not giving out personal informa-



Where many people fall short is putting a plan in action, like drawing up official power of attorney forms and naming a "trusted contact" with financial representatives.

tion online, not clicking on links and being skeptical of requests for money.

## Name a Power of Attorney and Trusted Contact

Where many people fall short is putting a plan in action, like drawing up official power of attorney forms and naming a "trusted contact" with financial representatives.

Some 66 percent of seniors do not have (or do not even know if they have) these set up, according to AIG. Trusts and other estate plans can also help.

"The most important thing is having a reliable, trusted other,

so that person has access and can see what's happening in your accounts," Solomon said.

Ellen Morris, a partner with Elder Law Associates, based in Boca Raton, Florida, said the power of attorney designation helps protect a person because, at least in Florida, you can sue that person if they do not act responsibly.

## Choose Traceable Methods to Give Funds

How you give out money matters in scams. Cash, money orders, and prepaid debit cards are virtually untraceable. Signing over deeds and other assets is hard to reverse. Elder financial abuse is hard to

prosecute, said Deb Geister, fraud subject matter expert for NICE Actimize, a financial compliance company. This is because "stranger scammers" are usually based offshore, victims often decline to prosecute family, and it is hard to pin a charge on professionals who charge excessive fees or commissions, she said.

If you are at all concerned about the person you are giving money to, use a check or automatic bank transfers (ACHs). You can also limit funds in accounts open to caregivers and set up alerts to warn of credit card charges and bank withdrawals.

Those methods are easier to trace. Geister had luck pulling funds back when she uncovered fraud using electronic transfers. She had an elderly relative who called for help after sending \$30,000 to a catfisher who struck up a romantic relationship online. They filed a dispute with the bank, and were able to resolve it with the institution.

"It's a good idea to get law enforcement involved, but not necessary," Geister said. "The bank will work out how to recover the funds behind the scenes. The earlier you contact, the better."

By Beth Pinsky  
From Reuters



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# Pride, Determination, and Courage Equal Grit

JEFF MINICK

Grit.

The word has several definitions. It can mean a tiny piece of dirt or rock, as in “The wind filled my eyes and nose with grit.” Some people use it to describe a redneck: “That grit has never left the farm.” (By the way, lest you think my use of redneck-insulting or gratuitous, I grew up with them, and several times in my life a good old boy has hauled me out of a sea of troubles.) Some employ grit to mean nasty or gross, as in “Joe is so gritty!”

None of those definitions apply here.

No-grit for my purposes refers to anyone with spunk, courage, determination, and the willpower to see a task or obligation through to the end. Grit is a word I love, the way its sound matches its meaning, a flinty-eyed intrepid single syllable.

Grit is also a character trait I much admire in others.

When I think of grit, the first people who come to mind are some members of our Armed Forces: the Navy SEALs, the Green Berets, the Army Rangers, the Air Force Special Operations force. Those who undergo Navy SEAL training, for example, nearly all credit not their physical strength for enduring that ordeal, but their absolute refusal to give up and seek an easier berth. They dig down and find within themselves reserves of willpower missing in their comrades who quit the training. After leaving the military, several of these SEALs have written books or made podcasts designed to inspire others to hold fast under tremendous pressure.

The protesters in Hong Kong display a different kind of grit. They have taken to the streets to battle for liberty. They understand what is coming down the pike, they see the future the Chinese Communist

**Grit is a word I love, the way its sound matches its meaning, a flinty-eyed intrepid single syllable.**

XOUBELLE/ISTOCKPHOTO/THUNDER

Party intends for them, and so they wave American flags, sing our national anthem, and vow in the face of all odds to stand up for freedom. Some are arrested, some beaten, and all, we may be sure, will be written down as enemies of the state. But they keep on fighting.

Some of our presidents have grit. Whatever we may think of him, Donald Trump is one of them. Not since Abraham Lincoln has a sitting president suffered such a deluge of personal attacks. Assailed daily by his political opponents, by Hollywood stars, and by the mainstream media, smeared with labels like racist, misogynist, and anti-Semite, President Trump keeps pushing his agenda and battling back. Like Gene Tunney and Muhammad Ali, two of boxing's great counterpunchers, Trump manages again and again to slip an opponent's punch, exploit the opening, and unleash a barrage of his own.

Given a similar pounding, most of us would have long ago caved.

Former governor of South Carolina Nikki Haley also showed courage and stamina in her office as US ambassador to the United Nations. She accused that body of gang-ing up on Israel, repeatedly opposed Iranian aggression and policies in the Middle East, and took positions unpopular with other member nations.

Grit. She's got it.

Most of us have friends or family members who possess this trait. I know an attorney in his mid-thirties who had the chutzpah to open his own office a year after graduating law school and now owns five such offices across his home state. He rises before dawn every morning, works out in a shed beside his house, manages his office and practices law, and has along with his wife adopted six of their seven children.

That's grit.

I know of an elderly man, a Cambodian physician, whom the Khmer Rouge hauled out of his hospital, imprisoned him along with millions of others, and forced him to work like a slave in the fields. One day he'd had enough, walked into the jungle, and eventually made it to the West.

That's grit.

I once knew a woman who spent two months dying of cancer of the liver. Never once did she complain. Several times she welcomed into her home old friends who had come to say goodbye, always playing the gracious hostess. She took as few pills as possible, willing to endure the pain to keep her thoughts unclouded. Determined to die in her own bed, surrounded by her husband,

her children, and several grandchildren, she refused the idea of expiring in a hospital. She remained in her right mind until just a few hours before her passing. A woman of deep faith, she taught those around her how to face death.

That's grit.

That was also my mother.

At the end of “The Bridges at Toko-Ri,” a war movie based on James Michener's novel by the same title, Rear Admiral Tarrant watches his pilots fly from the deck of a carrier and remarks “Where do we get such men? They leave this ship and they do their job. Then they must find this speck lost on the sea. When they find it they have to land on its pitching deck. Where do we get such men?”

The same question might be asked of those

Navy SEAL recruits are pushed to their physical and mental limits during a six-month Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) training in Coronado, Calif., in this file photo.

with grit. How do they come by it? What factors drive them to overcome so many obstacles?

Pride inspires the SEALs and their comrades-in-arms in other military services to complete their training.

A love of liberty stiffens the spines of the Hong Kong protesters.

A refusal to be intimidated surely accounts for the bold stands of Donald Trump and Nikki Haley.

Children who need special care, food, and clothing pull the young attorney from his bed every morning.

Desperation and hope guided the doctor who walked away from the killing fields.

Religious faith gave strength to my mother. In other words, grit is the offspring of many

parents. But whatever its source, when we encounter that special blend of courage, willpower, and resolution, we stand in awe of its undaunted valor.

Actor John Wayne, famed for his Westerns, including “True Grit,” once said, “Life is getting up one more time than you've been knocked down.”

I think that's as good a definition of grit as any.

*Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C., Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.*



PHOTOGRAPHER'S MATE 2ND CLASS ERIC S. LOGSDON/U.S. NAVY VIA GETTY IMAGES

## What to Do When a Loved One Is

MICHAEL COURTER

Almost all of us know someone who has a problem with addiction. For many people it is a close family member. Approximately 7 percent of Americans over the age of 12 are suffering from an addiction to drugs or alcohol. That number is a small fraction of all addictions when you consider other types of addictions to things such as TV, video games, internet surfing, social media, and gambling.

Addiction is any compulsive behavior that continues despite primarily negative consequences. These are acutely painful situations for people suffering from addiction and for close family members.

Let's look at an example of a couple whose daughter has been losing more and more of her life to alcohol. In the most recent incident, Peter and Anne's daughter, Amanda, was charged with being a minor in possession of alcohol after being pulled over and caught with a case of beer in the back seat of her car while driving with two of her girlfriends.

Anne and Peter are at odds about the incident, as they have been

**One side minimizes the problematic behavior while mitigating the damage it causes. The other side believes an effective punishment is the only way to get a person to toe the line.**

since Amanda started showing signs of alcoholism. Anne feels sad for her daughter and wants to help her. She makes excuses for Amanda's behavior and minimizes the problem. She shares glasses of wine with her daughter “for an occasional celebration.”

Peter is angry about Amanda's behavior and frustrated that he has not found a way to stop it. He yells and lectures at Amanda and threatens to kick her out of the house. He blames his wife for being too lenient with Amanda and believes that Anne is making the problem worse.

“Thank goodness she wasn't drinking and driving,” Anne declares, “She could have lost her license and even gone to jail.” Peter breaks in, “Anne, maybe she needs to go to jail. What if she had been drinking and gotten into an accident? Would that be enough for you to finally set some limits on her!”

**Understanding Addiction**

Anne and Peter show us two sides of an eternal conflict between parents or loved ones in relationship with someone who is addicted. One side minimizes the problematic behavior while



TOIMETAJA TOLKEBURO/UNSPLASH

Look for the side of them that wants to stop the addiction and show them that you believe that they can overcome it.

mitigating the damage it causes. The other side believes an effective punishment is the only way to get a person to toe the line. Both responses grow from the terrible fear that they are losing someone they love and the hopelessness that can't do anything about it.

Finding a way out of this dilemma requires an understanding of the function of addiction. Careful observation and research show that addictive behavior serves to terminate painful emotional states. Ordinarily, this emotion

regulation function takes place in close family relationships. In other words, people are designed from birth to soothe their negative emotions through the comfort, love, security, and acceptance of their family members. The addictive substance takes the place of these relationships by extinguishing the anxiety, boredom, guilt, shame, and anger of the addicted person. It works incredibly well in the short term, only to cause even more physical and emotional pain later.

## Suffering From Addiction

The pattern becomes self-reinforcing when withdrawing from the substances brings on the next bout of negative emotions. The addictive behaviors alienate people who could be the means of support and adds new heaps of guilt and shame atop the old ones due to broken promises and failures.

In addition, rejection by close family members is a common antecedent to a relapse of addictive behavior because it confirms to the addicted person that it is not safe or effective to trust others with your tender feelings and ask for comfort. Therefore, Peter's angry admonishments increase Amanda's negative emotions, cause distance in the relationship, and ruin the safety Amanda needs to rely on him for emotional comfort.

Meanwhile, Anne is helping to feed the denial Amanda is using to justify her behavior and keeping her from experiencing the consequences that could force her into a needed change. This behavior is often called enabling. Enabling is an action that makes it easier for another person to engage in or continue addictive behaviors. Common examples include giving someone the money or means to financially support

destructive behavior or protecting them from the full consequences of their behavior.

With this context, you can see how both Anne and Peter's behaviors are making it easier for Amanda to continue her addictive behavior. While in a relationship with an addicted person, people frequently swing between the two stances represented by Peter and Anne. When we are outraged by the person's behavior, we try to scold and punish it out of them. When saddened by the devastating consequences of it, we try to rescue them with love and care. It is natural to feel both of these states, but in such a serious situation we have to carefully study and employ what is effective, and not do things that make it worse.

**What You Can Do**

What can you do when a loved one is suffering from addiction? It is a difficult situation and a delicate balance. Let's start with what not to do.

1. Yelling, scolding, criticizing, lecturing, and reminding the person about their bad qualities is always a bad idea. They already know all of the bad things you

think of them, and they think even worse of themselves. This only adds further passion to the belief that they are useless failures, undeserving of care or love. Your desire to do this is based on anger, and your anger grows from your fear. You are better off expressing your fear and sadness directly. If you have to set boundaries, do it in a kind but firm way.

2. Don't engage in enabling behavior. Don't help the person get, pay for, or provide transportation to their addictive substances. Don't do anything to protect them from the natural consequences of their self-destructive behavior unless those consequences are a serious safety risk. Don't give money to someone with an active addiction.

3. Validate the person's pain and suffering even if they did it to themselves. Validate the pain and suffering that the person believes you caused them. This is the hardest part but it is powerful! Even if you don't believe that you did the things the person says, they still believe it. If you really want to help someone, they have to believe that you can really see their pain. Because their emotional pain is intangible, you might not believe it, but it is real. Help

them bring it to the surface and show it to the light of day. They are terrified that if people really knew them, they would find them detestable, unlovable, and would never want to see them again.

4. Look for the side of them that wants to stop the addiction and show them that you believe that they can overcome it.

5. Look for the vulnerable and fearful side of them that just wants to be loved and accepted like everyone else, and show them that you treasure that part of them.

6. Use your time and resources to help them when they are clearly ready. If you force someone into help against their will or if they are unsure, it is much less likely to work. They might tell you they are ready to stop when part of them is not ready. Don't be afraid to ask if they are ready to completely stop their addiction. The turmoil that follows a crisis is often an opportune time to offer help and ask for changes.

*Michael Courter is a therapist and counselor who believes in the power of personal growth, repairing relationships, and following your dreams. His website is CourterCounsel.com*

Do you have questions about relationships or personal growth that you would like Michael to address? Send them to me@CourterCounsel.com



# Rebecca Friedlander: On Helping Women Define 'Beautiful'

CATHERINE YANG

What is your definition of the word beautiful? Filmmaker Rebecca Friedlander took to the streets with this question, asking women and men on West Coast beaches, downtown London, on the sidewalk in Madrid—various places across the United States and Europe.

"Sometimes people would say 'I don't know.' Sometimes people would say it's being confident or comfortable in your own skin," Friedlander said. She would also ask whether they felt the culture did a good job of defining "beautiful." Across the board, the answer was no.

Then, she asked people: Who is the most beautiful person in the world?

"The biggest answer that I got was 'My mother,'" Friedlander said. "That tells me that kindness and caring and nurturing are a huge part of beauty."

What if we could tap into that as a culture? Friedlander is a lifelong creative, and the producer of "Radical Makeovers," a TV program featuring the transformations of 30 young women from all around the world.

Our culture often gets beauty all wrong, but Friedlander wanted to delve deeper, telling stories of transformation from the inside out. Recently, the program has been adapted into book form, titled "Finding Beautiful," which feature 12 of these women's stories.

## Mining for Gold

There's just something about a big transformation, a dramatic reveal, that we love.

"We love seeing someone's face transformed," Friedlander said. "I love a good makeover story, whether it's a house renovation or somebody who has a before-and-after makeover."

"I think a lot of my works stems around that," she said. In a way, being able to see a visual manifestation of change come about, can bring hope.

The seed for Friedlander's makeover program came from a docudrama project she

**There's just something about a big transformation, a dramatic reveal, that we love.**



Rebecca Friedlander.

had been producing, "Girl Perfect," which took viewers behind the scenes in the fashion industry.

The experience completely stripped away the glamorous veneer, and Friedlander realized she'd stumbled on a big, untold story.

"I remember I was shooting one day in Italy, in Florence, and we were overlooking what's known as the Gold Bridge," Friedlander said.

The Ponte Vecchio is still lined with souvenir vendors and jewelers today, but once it was a butcher's district.

"It used to be, hundreds of years ago, a meat market," she learned. "And they would throw the carcasses that they didn't want over the side of the bridge into the river."

"There was this huge stench because of the meat market," she said. "So there was this one ruler who came in to Florence, and he decided to shut down all of the butcher shops, and instead, he started the trend of doing gold shops and jewelry shops that still to this day, hundreds of years later, still line this bridge."

Friedlander realized the beauty industry had in fact become a sort of meat market, trading on a perishable commodity. She wanted to depict beauty as a lasting treasure, as gold.

## Beauty and Courage

There is a very important aspect to these 30 women's inside-out transformations: Every one of them discovered, reconnected, or had a moment of epiphany in their faith, bringing about an understanding of the true meaning of beautiful. After all, faith is one of the most transformative things a person can experience.

"I wanted to talk about the heart of transformation," Friedlander said.

The stories she chose were unique and dramatic. From a pastor's daughter, to a woman whose both parents worked in the porn industry, missionaries to models; these were women who battled crippling fear, anxiety, depression, bullying, or eating disorders, but somehow came out on the other side with peace, beauty, grace, and hope.

Though these women came from all walks of life, from all over the world and both difficult and prosperous backgrounds, there was a common thread of insecurity. "The common thread was having to do with their value and their worth, and overcoming those insecurities that kept them from really stepping into the next place of their life," Friedlander said. "They just had something that challenged them to go a bit deeper in life."

The behemoth of the beauty and fashion industries is proof enough that being beautiful matters to people, so it's easy to see how image is tied to self-worth.

"I think your identity and your security really comes from how you see yourself in the mirror," Friedlander said, whether you, or voices around you, are positive or negative. But "faith brings in the element of God's mirror for us, and how he sees us."

"I think all of these women begin to be changed when they realize that, you know,

it's not just about us discovering our own value in of ourselves, but it's really how our Creator sees us," Friedlander said. "And that we have an amazing Father in heaven, who is a good father. And he really does love us and wants to empower us. Having the Father and his mirror to the way that he sees his daughters played a huge part in helping these women overcome insecurities in life."

Hearing these women's stories moved Friedlander opened up her understanding even further. One big lesson she took from the experiences was honesty and courage.

These women were willing to be honest and vulnerable, and Friedlander saw this was key to their healing. Their willingness to share their stories, and their sometimes harrowing beginnings, was a sign that they have matured beyond what had happened to them in their past, and that they believed in what they were doing now enough to speak out about it.

"Often we tend to kind of hide, or put up masks, and really don't want to be known. So I think for me, it was just a really beautiful time of getting to know some amazing women a little bit deeper level," she said. "And I'm still really good friends, a lot of them today."

"If we are hiding behind a mask, we'll never actually face that mask and allow it to be removed," she said. "But there's so much joy and so much freedom and so much healing on the other side, if we're willing to go there."

## Creativity

Friedlander grew up as a tomboy, in a home where looks weren't important. She said it wasn't until she was in her mid-20s when she realized, well, it's not a bad thing to dress up and look nice. But that's not her transformation story.

"My story is that I grew up without a father in my life from about the age of 9," she said.

On Christmas day, her entire family was in a car accident—she, her youngest brother, and her father were thrown from the car. She had fractures and needed plastic surgery, but her father sustained a brain injury and remained in a coma for two weeks. When he woke up, he was a completely different person. Soon after, Friedlander's parents separated.

"I think that really left a hole," she said. "Not only are you devastated to lose your father, but then there's not really anything that comes along to fill that gap."

Friedlander has been creative since she can remember; singing with the family, playing piano, crafting, and making clothes for her dolls.

Faith was always a part of her upbringing, but coming to that decision for herself and making a commitment to it a bit later in life led to not just healing, but was a boon to her creativity.

"I think part of my transformation and part of my story was not just encountering God as my Father but actually seeing him show up, and do some of the things that a father would do," Friedlander said. A big part of her transformation was realizing that God didn't cause any of these bad things to happen, that sometimes life just happens, but He is always there to help pick up the pieces on the other side.

"I think you're born with certain strengths and certain gifts, and I was always very creative. But I think finding faith has opened up a whole new avenue of creativity, because I believe that the God of the universe is also very creative," she said.

Along with being a successful film and TV producer and self-taught photographer, Friedlander is also a songwriter, speaker, and minister, with 300 albums—and almost all of her creative endeavors are a one-woman show.

Early on in her career, Friedlander had been trying to record a music video, and her cat kept walking past the camera and ruining her shot, and after nearly a day's work she just considered how easy it would be to not do it. In fact, it would be crazy to continue pursuing a career as a creative, because the deck is stacked statistically against her.



1.



3.



5.



7.



2.



4.



6.



8.

**"I think all of these women begin to be changed when they realize that it's not just about us discovering our own value in of ourselves, but it's really how our Creator sees us."**

Rebecca Friedlander



**Though these women came from all walks of life, from all over the world and both difficult and prosperous backgrounds, there was a common thread of insecurity.**

She said this during a call where she had just returned from a month-long tour through Ireland and Scotland, and was two months from launching a conference for creatives seeking to launch their vision, while preparing to meet with her publisher about yet another book coming out, after one that will be released in December.

"A lot of my projects look impossible to people, not many people just travel the world and create their own TV shows by themselves," she said. "But I think God gives us vision first of all, and then he empowers us to do it."

"I don't just appreciate God as an artist but like he actually wants to be close to us and partner with us and create beautiful things, that's really the only way that I can describe it to people, because there's not really any way else to describe it, and I've just watched so many really supernatural and miracles happen to be able to tell these stories," she said. "And I give Him credit for that."

When Friedlander created the makeover show, she hadn't thought of putting into a book, but a best-selling author friend of hers encouraged her to write one. Hearing her reader's responses, it turned out to be the right decision.

"You know, we have so many resources in the world, they make us feel good for a moment, but then it doesn't last, it just kind of lets us down," she said. "'Finding Beautiful' really points to something that's lasting—there's something powerful about having a book that you can keep on your shelf, that you can go back to, or you can give to a friend, but just being able to hold that in your hands is another step in our process of discovering beauty."

"I have heard from women from all over the world who are deeply touched, I have many letters from people who tell me that they just are crying as they watch the show," she said.

"I have people who tell me that they sit down and watch them with their daughter, I have mothers telling me that they read the book with their daughter, I had one mother tell me that her 8-year-old is reading the book, and it's bringing up some amazing questions that they can talk through together about beauty and growing up," she said. "These girls are starting to ask those questions that are really early age. And so the feedback has been, not just positive, but has really resonated at a heart level with a lot of women."

**In "Finding Beautiful," Friedlander features women who discovered or reconnected with their faith, leading to a new understanding of beauty.**

1. and 2. Lauren tackled her fears of the unknown to take an adventurous trip around the world. She now lives in the Eastern Sierra mountains of California.

3. and 4. Oriel, a courageous Israeli whose grandmother survived the Holocaust, lives in Jerusalem.

5. and 6. Lucie found healing from severe childhood bullying and now works as a passionate young missionary in Paris.

7. and 8. Amy overcame severe anorexia and suicidal thoughts, and now is writing her story while working as a children's educator in England.





Vladimir Petrov from Mexico was the gold winner at the NTD International Piano Competition in New York on Sept. 28, 2019.

# Vladimir Petrov Wins Gold at NTD International Piano Competition

Competition seeks to 'bring back the glory of piano masterpieces from the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods'

CATHERINE YANG

Between the Schumann "Symphonic Etudes" and Liszt's "Mephisto Valse," Vladimir Petrov sat at the Steinway piano thinking—what did he get himself into? It was a difficult program he'd picked for the final round, but it paid off.

Petrov won the gold prize at the NTD International Piano Competition on Sept. 28 in New York.

"[During] the break between my pieces, I was thinking, 'What a difficult program I chose!' Not only because of the technical skill set a pianist needs, but because this music requires something more than only emotions or imagination," Petrov said.

"Schumann, and this piece of Liszt's, is very crazy. By crazy, I mean Schumann is always jumping from one idea to another, you need to demonstrate these unexpected characters," Petrov said. "Mephisto Valse too, it's very theatrical. Very."

His sensibility, combined with that technical skill set, emotion, and imagination, won

“Music ... has a lot of power. I don't know why, but it really cures you.”

Vladimir Petrov, gold winner

the judges over. Petrov had distinguished himself early in the competition and continued to perform a cut above the rest through each round.

## Reviving Tradition

The mission of the competition is to promote and preserve the 250 years of traditional piano repertoire, and "bring back the glory of piano masterpieces from the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods." The competition's repertoire focuses on works from those periods. There is no music written past 1900, save for a uniquely commissioned piece.

"It's good because that is the most pure music," Petrov said. "All the music started from there, many centuries ago."

"It's been forgotten through the years, and in our century totally forgotten. [But in some places] they keep their traditions very, very near to their families. I think that's very important, I feel it's very close to me."

"I feel that it's pure, very pure and honest."

## Competition

Petrov says he has friends who do three or

four competitions a year, but he himself rarely competes, so he was nervous all the way through.

"The adrenaline is quite unique—I'm exhausted," he said.

Despite that, Petrov said he enjoyed the competition because of the people. He said that every competition he has been to is well organized, but here it was perfect.

"The people who work here are working with their heart, and we feel it, we feel they are supporting us, everyone, from the first round," he said.

Petrov is from a family of musicians, his parents a cellist and violinist. "We can form a trio," he said.

He was born in Russia, and when he was 3, the family moved to Mexico. At age 5, he began playing the piano, and a decade later moved to Russia to study piano. He is currently finishing his master's degree in Moscow.

## Universal Language

For Petrov, music is essential to life, and being a trained musician is to be able to

share some very special parts of life with many more people.

"It's like I know one more language, it's the language of emotions," he said. "I think I can speak fluently in that language because people say they understand what I'm saying, what I feel. It's very interesting in the big world of music, so of course I like to perform."

He reminded us that when humans sent an introduction out into space, they sent classical music—Bach, Mozart, Beethoven.

"One of the [pieces] was the 5th Symphony of Beethoven. For some UFO that doesn't speak or will not understand our language, they will maybe understand our music," Petrov said.

"Music ... has a lot of power," he said. "I don't know why, but it really cures you."

As music is so important, musicians have a responsibility, too.

"To be very, very honest with yourself and with the public, and with the musician," Petrov said. And of course, to honor the composer. "The composer, when he writes music, their emotions are completely infused, completely, and that's why music gets to our hearts. That's what I think is most important."

## Winners

Eighty-six contestants from 28 countries signed up for the competition, which was held at the Baruch Performing Arts Center in New York City on Sept. 27 and Sept. 28. Fifteen made it to the semi-finals, and six advanced as finalists.

Nicolas Giacomelli from Italy won silver, and Sanghie Lee from South Korea won bronze.

Shih-Yeh Lu from Taiwan, Olena Miso from Ukraine, and Maxim Anikushin from New York won outstanding performance awards.

Shih-Yeh Lu also won the Commissioned Composition Award, for best performance of the commissioned work "Triumph of Goodness."

Becky Yao, head judge of the competition, said contestants have given such positive feedback about the repertoire, which puts emphasis on the foundations of piano music with Bach and Beethoven requirements.

"We were very happy, and as judges we feel very honored to listen to those talented pianists," Yao said.

"This year, there were so many young pianists, I'm so happy to see young people who want to come back to this tradition."

## 'Triumph of Goodness'

The commissioned piece that all semi-finalists had to memorize touched on tradition in an unexpected way. Written by the world-renowned Shen Yun Performing Arts artistic director D.F., it was distinctly Chinese, though it was arranged for piano with classical techniques.

Contest judge Susan Liu, who arranged the piece for piano, said she tried to bring her culture to the contestants, but was amazed and honored to find they had brought their culture to her. The middle segment is a dance movement, and Liu said she heard Italian, Japanese, and perhaps some Latin dance styles in there as well.

"All of you are just wonderful, beyond good," Liu told the pianists afterward. She described the story the piece was originally written for, with heavenly fairies and imperial guards of ancient China, depicted in music through a brilliant trio.

As those familiar with the world-class Shen Yun might know, D.F. has written



Silver winner Nicolas Giacomelli.

many pieces for the dance company's unique orchestra and bel canto vocalists.

"He wrote numerous beautiful melodies, beautiful songs, and a lot of other compositions," Liu said.

For the contestants, this blend of East and West and emphasis on tradition posed a creative challenge they've not encountered elsewhere.

"It's very interesting, because it's called the 'Triumph of Goodness,' and through the piece, you can find major and minor [keys], and it's like an angel and devil fighting," said Fagan, a pianist from Azerbaijan. "Then there is the triumph of goodness, and peace came in C major, the tune where you cannot find black keys."

## Giacomelli: 'Music is important to a person's well-being'

Robert Schumann's "Kreisleriana," an eight-movement dramatic fantasy, was a favorite of his critics, as well as of silver-winner Nicolas Giacomelli and a member of the audience who asked for a photo with him.

"His performance has everything—technique, mastery, expression of the soul," she said before darting back into the recital hall.

Giacomelli performed the Schumann piece and Tchaikovsky's "Dumka."

"Schumann's 'Kreisleriana,' it is one of my favorite pieces in the whole of classical music. I think it's wonderful because it's so varied. There are a lot of things inside, a lot of details, little details, and the musician can also have much freedom in the piece. He can give his own vision, because it's very romantic," Giacomelli said.

"Dumka" may not be as famous as "Kreisleriana," but it's also a well-loved piece.

"It's this big picture of Russian culture of the late 19th century," Giacomelli said. "It has a very wonderful melody."

Giacomelli said he has an affinity for big romantic pieces that are on the expressive side, but was also deeply appreciative of the competition's emphasis on tradition, including bringing Bach etudes into the early rounds.

He said part of a musician's job is to "instruct audiences, always push them a little bit farther, but always within the tradition."

Music is a wonderful vehicle to do so, because it is something that touches everyone's lives.

"Music is important to a person's well-being. It is something that can always be with you," he said. "It is a big part of the life of a person, and important in society."

Giacomelli, 20, studies piano at the Bologna Conservatory. He's dreamed of playing classical music since he was a child, so when people ask about the hours of practice,

ing or the grind, he says he doesn't think of it that way at all.

"I want to play," Giacomelli said, "and this is the way to do it."

## Lee on Schumann's Love Story

Two years ago, bronze-winner Sanghie Lee played Schumann's Fantasia in C major and it immediately touched her heart.

"I thought, this is my story!" Lee said.

Robert and Clara Schumann's love story is a famous one, and this piece is a key piece of it. Schumann had composed a piece titled "Ruines" to express the heartache he felt being separated from his beloved Clara, and it later became part of the first movement of the Fantasia. The piece also quotes Beethoven on this theme, taking a musical phrase from the song cycle "An die ferne Geliebte," which originally accompanied the text "Accept then these songs [beloved, which I sang for you alone]."

"Actually, my husband and I had a long-distance relationship for four years," Lee said. "So when I played this song the first time I'd found my story. I love this."

Alongside the Fantasia, she played Rachmaninoff's Moments Musicaux.

"Even though he's a 20th-century composer, his music is conservative, it is the Romantic period," she said. "His music is magnificent. Many people know Rachmaninoff had big hands, so his music utilizes all the ranges and registers of the keyboard, so it sounds really magnificent."

Lee said the competition had a warm and welcoming atmosphere that allowed her to forget she was competing, and for that, she was grateful. But her favorite aspect of the competition was its focus on tradition.

During the semi-finals, contestants had their pick of Beethoven sonatas, a staple of the entire body of piano music. Many of the 15 contestants ended up performing the same piece, and Lee said with music so foundational as Beethoven, or Bach in the preliminaries, it's immediately clear who possesses mature artistry and who needs more practice. When contestants have their pick of modern and lesser-known works, it's easier to be flashy and different but still lack in skill.

"We need to go back to the traditional music sometimes to have that base," Lee said. The traditional repertoire influences everything that came after it, she said, so it's something we need to know.

For Lee, being a musician is about deeply understanding the composer's original ideas, and expressing them skillfully enough for the audience to understand.

"I think it's most important to be a good person, because playing music is to understand others, so we need to be a thoughtful person and understand others," Lee said.

Bronze winner Sanghie Lee from South Korea.



NTD

# The Promise of Past Days

Book Review: 'America's Forgotten Colonial History'



National Monument to the Forefathers, in Plymouth, Mass.

LINDA WIEGENFELD

There's an impressive monument in Plymouth, Massachusetts, that honors the ideals of the Pilgrims. Known as the National Monument to the Forefathers, it was designed by Boston artist Hammett Billings, and at the time of its dedication in 1889, the monument was visible for miles. But years of tree growth have concealed it. It is now a hidden gem.

Dana Huntley's new book "America's Forgotten Colonial History" covers the 150 years—the six generations between Plymouth Plantation and the mid-18th century—that have not been extensively written about. Like the National Monument to the Forefathers, this time period is a hidden gem of history.

During this period, the population colonizing English North America, Huntley writes, grew from a few hundred to 2.5 million. Thirteen separate colonies, each with its own capital, came into existence. Philadelphia, New York, and Boston developed into major British trading ports. The groundwork was laid for the future, and more besides.

## Why This Author?

Huntley is able to give the reader a comprehensive backstory on this era as he has knowledge of both sides of the pond. Born on a New Hampshire dairy farm, he comes from English gentry—farm families—on both his mother's and father's sides. The families were here before the 1640s and played a

role in every part of New England history.

He also holds a doctorate in British literature and has written reviews and features for British Heritage (now British Heritage Travel) for many years.

Just as important, Huntley takes a balanced tone when talking about colonial days—a virtue any book on history could use more of these days.

## From Royalty to Self-Government

Huntley does a wonderful job in describing England's royalty. He provides a good reminder that the English royals believed in their divine right to rule, and even if their specific authority was subject to negotiation, the English people in the time of the colonies did not question their right to rule.

Particularly fascinating was the section on Henry VIII. In a very entertaining manner, Huntley summarizes Henry VIII's reasons for wanting to divorce, leaving the reader hungry for even more

details. Henry's desire to divorce would drive him to break his Catholic ties and form the Church of England.

In tracing the English royals, the author skillfully contrasts this English conception of the world with that of the colonies, where the idea of democratic government was beginning. The Mayflower Compact (signed on Nov. 11, 1620) was, Huntley says, "probably the first instrument of self-government ever drawn up that reflected a Reformed Protestant view of the world."

As the colonies were far from Mother England, a country often distracted by its own problems, England did not take an active role in managing the developing colonies. As a result, America became self-reliant, and when England tried to reassert its power at a later date, it was too late.

## From Conformity to Religious Freedom

It may be difficult today for us to see that differences in England's Christian churches' beliefs, prac-

tices, and worship liturgies could cause so many years of warfare, persecution, and torture, yet Huntley explains that is exactly what happened.

It was inevitable, then, that with the religious and political climate so unpromising in England, many would decide to emigrate. Huntley has an especially impressive section on the Puritans, who willingly endured hardships on cramped ships and risked everything to create a society in the largely uncharted colonies in order to practice their faith.

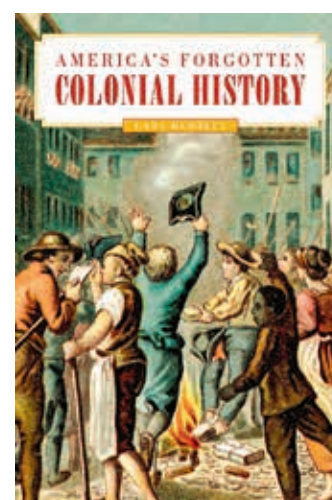
Ironically, the Puritans did not extend the same religious freedom to those who did not share their beliefs, but they did establish the concept. Roger Williams, Anne Hutchinson, and William Penn were among the leaders who chose to continue the idea of religious liberty.

Today, religious liberty has become a fundamental American right. Yet, just as it has been threatened in the past, it is threatened now. Huntley's book reminds us



## 'America's Forgotten Colonial History'

Dana Huntley  
Rowman & Littlefield  
240 pages, hardcover



Dana Huntley's important and entertaining book on a nearly forgotten time in American colonial history.

that religious freedom needs to be affirmed by every generation if the American experiment is to endure.

## Introducing New Opportunities for Capitalism

Capitalism was at the heart of establishing the colonies. The colonization of America was due in large part to charter companies, wherein stockholders, usually merchants and wealthy landowners, sought personal economic gain.

As establishing colonies was an expensive and risky business, charter companies allowed the Crown to reap the benefits of colonization—natural resources, new markets for English goods, leverage against the Spanish—without bearing the costs.

English companies needed people willing to settle in North America. So they offered land to anyone who would risk crossing the Atlantic. Many of the settlers could never have owned land in Europe. This new advantage led to the tradition of equal opportunity in America.

Huntley emphasizes capitalism's extraordinary achievements in the early days. Capitalism worked because people could improve their place in society and could enjoy goods and services not formerly available to them.

However, Huntley also shows capitalism at a dark time. Plantation owners soon found that indentured servants, who were promised freedom and land at the end of their indenture, were not going to be an efficient, sustainable source of labor, and slavery, unfortunately, began in earnest.

The horrific legacy of slavery can never be forgotten. To paraphrase a statement by Churchill about democracy: No one pretends that capitalism is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that capitalism is the worst economic system except for all those other systems that have been tried from time to time.

The idea of capitalism as a free market, with Americans, rather than the government, making their own individual choices was

promising in the colonial days and continues to be promising today.

In sum, Huntley's book is an entertaining and comprehensive study of a 150-year period, but it is only a starting point for further study.

For Americans, the study of U.S. history is essential. Our country can only work well when we as citizens make well-informed decisions and when we do not become vulnerable to false ideas. Beyond that, not only can such a study provide us with an educated insight into where our beliefs come from but, in giving us a sense of shared experiences, it can also unite us.

It is fortunate, then, that this book leaves me wanting more, and leaves me with the reminder of just how amazing and unique the American experience has been.

Linda Wiegenfeld is a retired teacher with 45 years' experience teaching children. She can be reached for comments or suggestions at LWiegenfeld@aol.com



# Kids Who Are Young for Their Grade Much Likelier to Be Diagnosed With ADHD and Depression, Study Finds

KERRY MCDONALD



Youthful exuberance should be valued and encouraged, not pathologized.

Parents want the best for their children, particularly when it comes to education. While many parents may feel the cultural push toward earlier schooling, some are questioning these evolving norms and delaying school enrollment or forgoing conventional schooling altogether.

**Intellectual Disabilities and Depression**  
Previous findings by Harvard researchers showed increased ADHD diagnosis rates for children who were the youngest in their kindergarten class compared to the oldest ones. But new research just published in JAMA Pediatrics reveals that in addition to higher ADHD diagnoses of children who are among the younger ones in their grade, relative youth may also lead to increased diagnosis of intellectual disabilities and depression.

The new study looked at more than one million children in the UK and found that those who were among the youngest quarter in their grade were 30 percent more likely than the oldest quarter of the children to be diagnosed with an intellectual disability. These youngsters were 40 percent more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD, and 30 percent more likely to be diagnosed with depression. The researchers conclude: "In this study, relative youth status in the school year is associated with an increased risk of diagnosis of ADHD, intellectual disability, and depression in childhood."

These findings should send shivers up the spines of parents and teachers. Holding other childhood variables constant, the researchers were able to pinpoint relative youth as the key factor leading children to be diagnosed with significant academic and mental health issues. These children may have been more inattentive and energetic because they were younger, not because they had ADHD. Similarly, they may have been slower to learn because they were nearly a year younger upon school entry than their older peers in the same grade.

These children didn't have an intellectual disability; they were just little. It also shouldn't come as a surprise to any of us that if relatively immature children are being expected to sit still and pay attention in class, and do the same academic work as children who are nearly one year older, it could lead to higher rates of depression. Who wouldn't feel depressed in this situation?

Last fall, Harvard researchers published findings in the New England Journal of Medicine showing that US children who were

among the youngest in their grade were far more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD than the oldest children in their grade. Specifically, the researchers found that in states with a September 1 kindergarten enrollment cut-off date, children born in August were 30 percent more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD than children born in September.

In other words, the newly-minted five-year-olds were less attentive and more fidgety than the children who were about to turn six. This was particularly true of boys. Anyone who spends time with young children knows that there can be a big difference between a five-year-old and a six-year-old. Youthful exuberance should be valued and encouraged, not pathologized.

**ADHD Diagnosis Dragnet**

The lead Harvard researcher, Timothy Layton, concluded: "Our findings suggest the possibility that large numbers of kids are being overdiagnosed and overtreated for ADHD because they happen to be relatively immature compared to their older classmates in the early years of elementary school."

The researchers in the new UK study find similar results related to ADHD overdiagnosis, along with diagnosis of intellectual disabilities and depression. They suggest more research should be done on the link between early school enrollment and these potentially adverse outcomes.

Meanwhile, parents should be aware that

**Anyone who spends time with young children knows that there can be a big difference between a five-year-old and a six-year-old.**

*Kerry McDonald is a senior education fellow at the Foundation for Economic Education and author of "Unschooled: Raising Curious, Well-Educated Children Outside the Conventional Classroom" (Chicago Review Press, 2019). This article was originally published on FEE.org*

their children could be caught up in a diagnosis dragnet for no other reason than relative youthfulness. And educators should be aware that if a child has a hard time sitting still and paying attention, is not catching on to the learning material as quickly as her peers, or is showing signs of depression, it could very well be that she is simply younger than the other kids. She may not yet be developmentally ready to listen and learn, and the disconnect between her own timetable and the school's artificial one may cause her emotional turmoil.

The UK researchers suggest that parents can defer school entry, particularly for children who may be relatively immature compared to their peers, but they warn that this deferral may only shift the benchmark. If some children defer due to relative youth, there will simply be a new group that will be relatively young and could potentially experience the same issues. According to the researchers: "In some countries, parents of relatively young children can defer entry for a year. Deferment of children who are both relatively young and developmentally immature could reduce differences in abilities, but deferral of entry for all relatively young children would only change who is relatively young."

Perhaps the best solution is to give children the freedom to grow and develop in their own way, without forcing them to conform to arbitrary standards. Rather than giving kids a label, just give them time.

## FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

WEEK 41, 2019



### A Home Song

by Henry Van Dyke

I read within a poet's book  
A word that starred the page:  
"Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage!"

Yes, that is true, and something more:  
You'll find, where'er you roam,  
That marble floors and gilded walls  
Can never make a home.

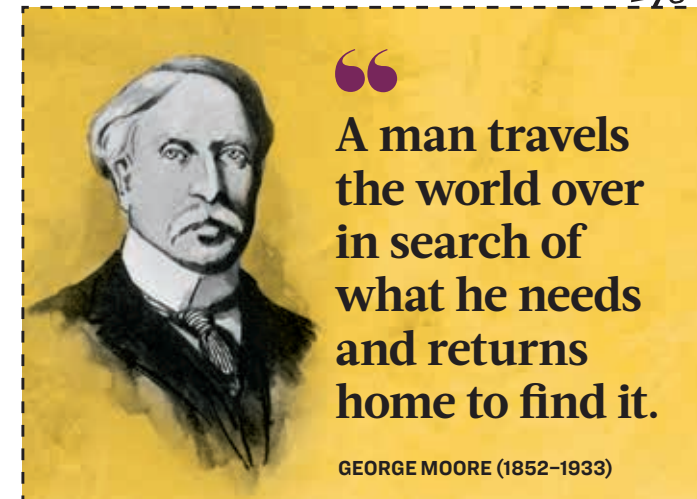
But every house where Love abides,  
Is surely home, and home-sweet-home:  
For there the heart can rest.



ARDEAA/SHUTTERSTOCK



KURT AND ROH  
DOWHSTOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK



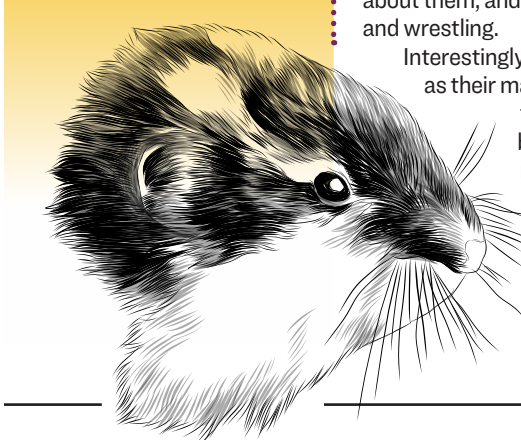
GEORGE MOORE (1852-1933)  
PUBLIC DOMAIN

By Aidan Danza, age 13

ALL ILLUSTRATIONS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

## ARCTIC ANIMALS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT

**The Arctic is normally thought of as a barren, cold, desolate place. This is the truth—it simply is very, very cold! However, that does not mean it is lifeless. There are all kinds of animals that call the arctic home.**



**LEMMINGS**

Lemmings are small animals that look like a very portly hamster. They are distributed throughout the Arctic. They live in the arctic, and hibernate underground, under the deep snow.

When there is no snow, they live in moist areas.

They are black and brown, with some golden streaks—some lemmings have more gold than others. They never change their fur color and have no visible tail.

They are adults as early as three weeks old for females and four weeks for males. They give birth to between five and thirteen young at a time. Males have quite a temper about them, and they are often seen boxing and wrestling.

Interestingly, snowy owls eat lemmings as their main staple, so whenever the lemming population booms, snowy owls have more young because there is more food to support them. But when winter comes and lemmings go underground, there is less food for all these

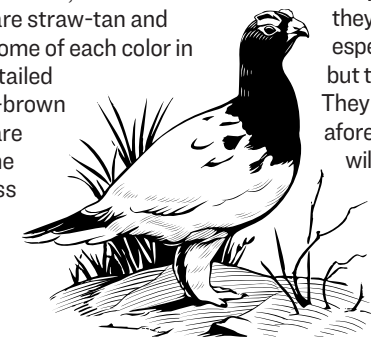
young owls and the young ones are forced south to find food. This is why sometimes snowy owls turn up in what seems like the oddest places!

**PTARMIGANS**

What-igan? Pronounced "tarmigin" with a silent p, these birds of the arctic are related to grouse. Some are pure white in the winter, while in the spring and summer they have rock-like coloration.

There are three species of ptarmigan: white-tailed, willow, and rock, each with different coloration. They all have the same shape, however, and are stocky and chicken-like, with no wattles.

As for coloration, spring willow ptarmigans are white below, and rust-red above, females are straw-tan and black-flecked, with some of each color in each feather. White-tailed ptarmigans are gray-brown above, and females are almost exactly like the female willow, but less brown and more gray. All ptarmigans in winter are pure white.



They live in areas above the treeline, and they like tundra, meadows, and rocky outcrops. They eat all kinds of plant material, including stems, seeds, buds, flowers, leaves, fruits, and insects. The female makes a scrape in the ground, and she lays 2-8 eggs. When the babies hatch, they are covered with dense down. They leave the nest 6-12 hours after the last egg hatches.

**WOLVERINES**

Wolverines are a very strange looking animal. They look like a very small, furry, bear. In reality, they are actually the largest member of the weasel family.

They certainly eat like a bear—they do consume plant material, especially in the summer season, but they eat a lot of meat as well. They eat rabbits, rodents (and the aforementioned lemmings), but will eat weak, sick, or injured large mammals, such as caribou, moose, and mountain goats.

They know how to store food, because they



put their meat into the snow for use as a refrigerator. They have extremely strong jaws; strong enough to crush bone. In some instances, they eat the bones and teeth of their prey.

They can smell prey under 20 feet of snow, and will dig into burrows and eat hibernating animals. Wolverines raise their babies for two years, in a cave dug into the snow.

They will stay with their mother until they are ready to leave in about a year and a half. Interestingly, but unsurprisingly, their scientific name means "glutton glutton" translated from Latin.

## Beyond School Admissions: How to Instill a Lifelong Love of Learning for Real World Success

ANNA CHOBOR



Children who use their natural curiosity and hunger for knowledge will cultivate a lifelong love for learning.

Beginning at birth children are like "sponges," absorbing everything in their environment. Their minds are filled with soaking up as much information as possible, constantly and effortlessly. This is the beginning of a lifelong process in exploring the world with an innate sense of wonder and eagerness to learn.

Children who use their natural curiosity and hunger for knowledge will cultivate a lifelong love for learning. When they are internally motivated to know about things of interest, children will enthusiastically ask how, what, and why. They will become self-disciplined and confident. As a result, they will take initiative and develop strong academic skills.

A love of lifelong learning can help gain acceptance into selective schools and colleges—the ethical way. Just as parents want their children to get into an excellent college where they will excel, colleges have needs too. They want students who reflect the institution's priorities (although each one differs).

In addition to having good grades and test scores, students who help to enhance a strong sense of community with their strengths are desirable. This is where a love of lifelong learning can be instrumental in gaining acceptance into schools of choice. Students who cultivate their authentic interests are passionate about learning and are hardworking. These assets are valued by schools who believe in

building a strong educational environment through students with a diversity of talents.

It is important for parents to ask themselves what kind of model they want to be for their children. They may think they are communicating the message that being a good person is what is most important. However, if kids are "pushed" into schools that do not meet their personal academic goals, they may hear "achievement, achievement, achievement" instead of "be a good person" or "follow your dreams."

Let us ponder a love of learning and its relationship to the recent 2019 college admissions scandal, Operation Varsity Blues. This scheme involved wealthy parents of high social status who cheated and bribed top college officials and others to accept their unqualified children. After investigations, federal prosecutors discovered the scandalous ways in which students would gain acceptance into targeted colleges: exam proctors were bribed to alter entrance test scores, coaches were bribed to choose unqualified athletes, and elite colleges were offered substantial donations.

At least 50 people have been charged in connection with this scheme, with nearly 33 parents facing felony counts of conspiring to commit honest-services fraud. Consequences for many of these individuals are prison and/or monetary fees. Some have already lost lucrative employment due to termination or resignation. The children are emotionally distraught. The aftermath of this illegal and immoral scandal is still evolving, and one wonders how its outcome will affect future college applicants (and educational institutions).

Perhaps some families do not seriously consider the fact that higher educational institutions are bound by morality and laws. They may see its governing rules as conditional and depending on convenience. Although a small percentage of schools may move students toward graduation because they realize that today's students are future donors, many unqualified individuals who are accepted to college as a result of bribery will find it difficult to finish their degrees.

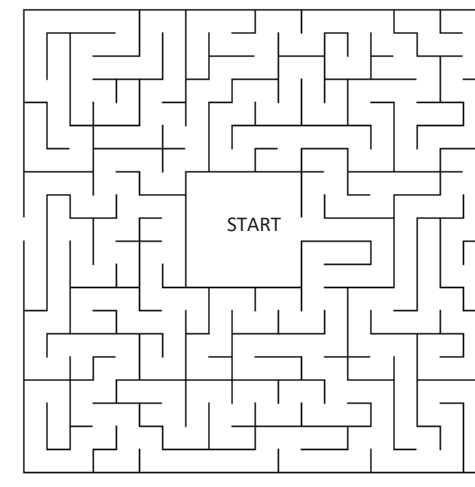
Will children be happy and pro-

ductive when enrolled into schools that are not the right fit for their intellect and passion, or will they thrive when viewed as confident young adults who aim to fulfill personal goals? It is important for parents to decide what is really best for their children's future.

Through almost 30 years as an accomplished educator, I have found that it is important for parents to just pause and listen to their children's wishes and trust that highest academic potential will be reached through a genuine love of learning and a focus on individual strengths. It is essential for parents to help children cultivate ethical character and reduce achievement-related stress. Let them pursue and reach their true dreams and school acceptance will be a process of alignment rather than judgment.

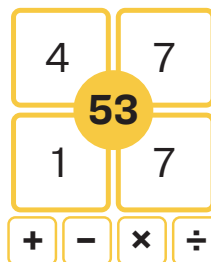
*Anna Chobor is an award-winning teacher, literacy and learning specialist, and education consultant. For more information on instilling a love for lifelong learning and overall educational support for your children, visit AnnaChobor.com*

## AMAZING ESCAPES!



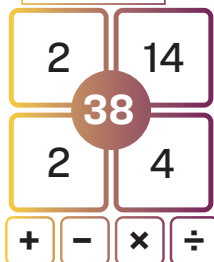
**USE THE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE CORNERS, AND THE OPERANDS (+, - AND X)** to build an equation to get the solution in the middle. There may be more than one "unique" solution but, there may also be "equivalent" solutions. For example:  $6 + (7 \times 3) + 1 = 28$  and  $1 + (7 \times 3) + 6 = 28$

Easy puzzle 1



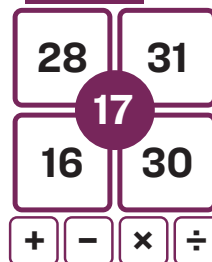
Solution For Easy 1  
 $1 \times (7 + 7 \times 7)$

Medium puzzle 1

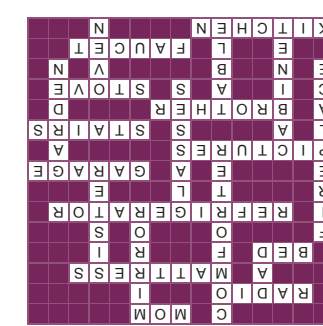
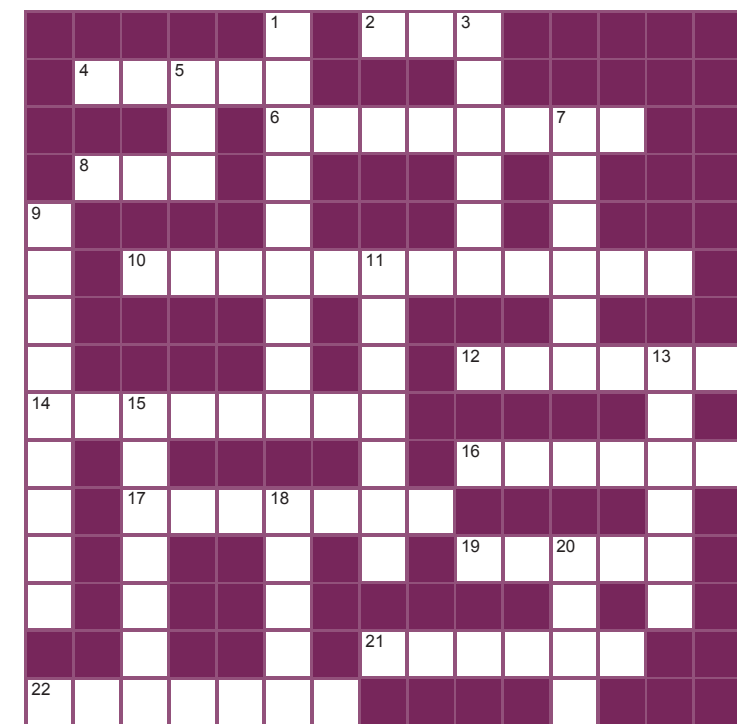


Solution for Medium 1  
 $2 \times 2 \times (9 + 9)$

Hard puzzle 1



Solution for Hard 1  
 $91 - 82 - 0E + 1C$



**Down**

- 1 Bed spread (9)
- 3 We comb our hair in front of one (6)
- 5 He works hard! (3)
- 7 Sometimes brother's nemesis (6)
- 9 Hot spot (9)
- 11 What we put drinks in (7)
- 13 Where we grow flowers (6)
- 15 Where we keep our dishes (7)
- 18 Where the family eats dinner (5)
- 20 Where pizzas get hot! (4)

**Across**

- 2 She makes a house a home (3)
- 4 It may come with a CD player (5)
- 6 Crash pad? (8)
- 8 Sleeping place (3)
- 10 Where we keep the milk (12)
- 12 Parking place? (6)
- 14 We hang them on walls (8)
- 16 Bedrooms are often up the \_\_\_\_\_ (6)
- 17 These sometimes test our patience (7)
- 19 Where mom makes dinner (5)
- 21 Where we get our water (6)
- 22 Often the center of our home (7)



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# THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION



The psychopathology of blaming others can be traced back to Adam and Eve. “The Expulsion of Adam and Eve From Paradise,” 1866, by Gustave Doré for “La Grande Bible de Tours.”

COMMENTARY

## What’s Wrong With the World?

G.K. Chesterton’s response to an age-old question

JAMES SALE

In 1910, G.K. Chesterton’s book “What’s Wrong With the World” was published, and the title did not include a question mark. Indeed, the book is a collection of essays on pressing—burning even—topics of the day such as emancipation, the suffragettes, public schools, ownership, and much more besides. For those unfamiliar with the works (and Chesterton is astonishingly prolific as a writer), I strongly recommend him. His writings have a scope, a flair, and a brilliance that lead me to conclude that he is possibly the greatest writer (excepting the poets) of the 20th century. Because there is no question mark in the title of the collection, we see

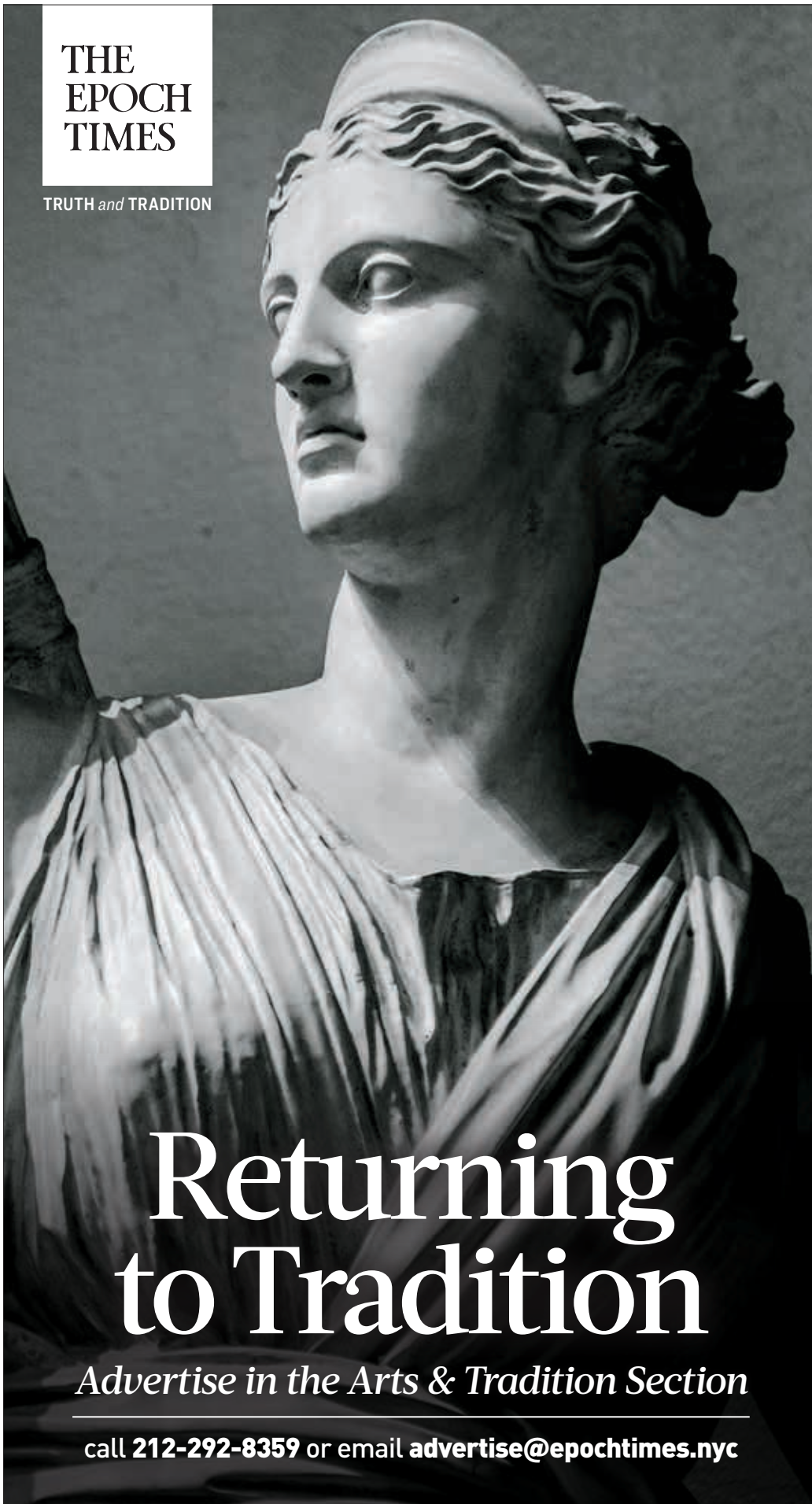
**What’s wrong with the world? Said writer G.K. Chesterton: ‘I am.’**

that Chesterton is offering us his views on actually what is wrong with the world; or more precisely, what is wrong with the world in 1910 as he saw it. Keep in mind that in 1910, World War I had not yet occurred, and the world seemed a much more stable place than perhaps it does today. But according to a Gilbert Magazine article by James V. Schall, a national newspaper of the period, called The Daily Herald (now defunct), picked up on this title and thought it would make a good question for its readers, so it invited them to write in with their observations on “what’s wrong with the world?” Of course, it is a fabulous question and one could imagine readers of The Epoch Times writing in to answer it. What is wrong with the

world? Perhaps some might say the Democrats. Or the Republicans. Or the Clintons or Trump. Some might think more widely: communism, socialism, feminism, political cant, China, Russia, Iran, flaky allies, or poverty, or homelessness. And so the list goes on, and doubtless everyone has their reasons for their particular answer. Chesterton, however, never one to shy away from an opinion, wrote in and gave his two-word answer, which the paper published. What’s wrong with the world? Said Chesterton: “I am.” In other words, Chesterton took full responsibility for the state of the world and realized that in changing it, he had to change himself first. *Continued on Page 16*



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Explainer:

## What Exactly Do Musical Conductors Do?



WHITE SNOW/SHUTTERSTOCK

WARWICK POTTER

Conductors are a relatively new breed of musician. Only as compositions became more complex circa 1810 (blame Beethoven!) did the actual need for a conductor become more relevant. Conductors were in demand pre-Beethoven, but to a far lesser degree.

As the noted author and music critic Norman Lebrecht has alluded to in his book "The Maestro Myth," there remains considerable mystique surrounding conductors, despite the fact that thousands of performance recordings showing conductors "face-on" are now available online. One such example is Sir Simon Rattle conducting Gustav Mahler's 2nd symphony.

As with all branches of music performance, a conductor's job is communication, not only musically but also beyond the music.

**Pre-Performance**

A conductor's communication with an audience begins from the first step onto the concert platform. During the walk to the podium, he or she must not only negotiate safe passage through an often crowded performance space, but also smile, engage with both audience and performers, and complete the pre-concert rituals. (The latter include acknowledging audience and orchestra, shaking hands with the concertmaster, and bowing.)

All this while also concentrating on how the opening few bars of the repertoire need to be conducted technically and musically.

A conductor will usually be professionally proficient on at least one instrument. He or she must, however, have a strong working knowledge and understanding of all instruments and voices being conducted. The score is fully absorbed prior to the rehearsal stage and is very rarely sight-read on the podium itself.

The choice of concert attire can effectively communicate with audience members during "the walk." Although formal concert dress for mainstream subscription concerts is still in vogue, other concert portfolios offer more interesting dress options: The sight of Darth Vader, for example, conducting is not unusual!

I use a pair of trusted red stripy shoes to make impact with audiences, a fact noted by reviewers who have compared me to the Bishop of Rome.

In the 21st century, conductors are increasingly required to introduce the performance. But eventually, the conductor will turn his or her back on the audience (with the exception of those sitting in choir stalls) and the music will commence.

**What About Those Arm Movements?**

Intense eye contact with the ensemble members is pivotal to the success of most performances. Now comes the almost fabled waving of arms.

This is part mathematical, part artistic. The mathematical refers to the precise time-keeping of rhythm, which in turn allows the ensemble to have the greatest chance of performing together.

Many conductors use a baton to help pinpoint this use of time, although some do not. Such an individual choice can vary with the size and style of the repertoire being performed. The beating arm is usually on the individual's strongest side: I am right-handed, for example.

A major part of the conductor's role is to accurately show the length of each bar according to the interpretation and theoretical structure of it. A bar is a mathematical tool that helps to visually organize the music for the performers concerned.

An avid audience member will notice that most bars have beating patterns that conductors utilize. The beating pattern is dictated by the number of beats in the bar. (The usual number of beats would be between two and four.) It is defined by a combination of vertical and horizontal beats. (The conductor will indicate these by moving the arm up or down or side to side.)

The more beats there are, the more complex the pattern becomes. The type of beat pattern is usually dictated by and reflects the rhythmic structure of each bar.

**In general terms, the louder the music is, the larger the size of physical gesture used.**

Nearly all bars have first and last beats, respectively known as the downbeat and upbeat. (It is rarer for bars to have only one beat.) Downbeats move from north to south, and upbeats do the opposite: Imagine drawing an imaginary line in the air from 12:00 to 6:00 (downbeat) on a clock, and vice versa (upbeat).

Both downbeats and upbeats act as a visual aid to performers to check respective points within the bars and scores being played. Upbeats and downbeats visualize bar lines, which in turn mathematically aid the music.

While most bars in music are of similar lengths, this is not always the case, as



STOKKETE/SHUTTERSTOCK

online recordings of Stravinsky's "The Rite of Spring" will prove. This notorious work has multiple and often changing bar lengths, all of which require high levels of technique and musicality from a conductor.

**Emphasizing Volume**

The beating arm does not only communicate time; it also has the potential to influence degrees of volume. In general terms, the louder the music is, the larger the size of physical gesture used.

A conductor's whole body helps to communicate the artistic message to an ensemble and, consequently, to audiences. From head to toe, it can musically influence the performance, via such things as player cues, dynamic control (volume), ensemble balance, and artistic shape.

Communication, whether verbal or otherwise, is a conductor's business. Without successful communication from the podium, the enjoyment of music making for all concerned, including the audience, is lessened.

Warwick Potter is a lecturer in conducting at The University of Queensland, in Australia. This article was originally published on The Conversation.

**A conductor's whole body helps to communicate the artistic message to an ensemble.**

1. The conductor's role is to communicate with the performers and their audience. Their role is part artistic, part mathematical.

2. Conductor Antoine Marguier posed to give a downbeat.

3. Conductor Andrey Chernyi asks the symphony orchestra for more volume.

4. Conductor Vitaliy Kovalchuk in a theatrical costume to communicate to the audience.



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PUBLIC DOMAIN



PUBLIC DOMAIN

(Above)  
G.K. Chesterton  
at Work, Crisis  
Magazine.

(Left)  
God created  
us to be  
responsible for  
our actions.  
The painting  
“Original  
Sin With the  
Expulsion From  
Eden,” created  
between 1626  
and 1677,  
attributed to  
Willem van Herp  
the Elder.

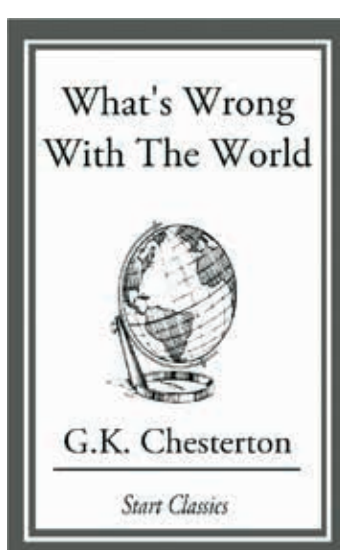
(Right)  
“Haman  
Begging Esther  
for Mercy” by  
Rembrandt.  
National  
Museum of Art  
of Romania,  
Bucharest,  
Romania.



## COMMENTARY

# What's Wrong With the World?

G.K. Chesterton's response to an age-old question



G.K. Chesterton's "What's Wrong With the World."

Continued from Page 13

## The Blame Game

Chesterton's response is in plumb contrast to everything that is going on in the West right now. We have protesters protesting, demanding that somebody else—who? Other people? The government? Political parties?—make the world a better place, but in all this, there is never a sense of self-examination: What have I contributed to the sorry state of the world?

We have Greta Thunberg leading the “children's crusade” so that millions of children around the world can take a day or more off from school and tell the adults, especially their parents, how they've got it all wrong. Greta's mum and dad now won't use airplanes and don't eat meat, as their child instructs them on what's wrong with the world. Clearly, at this rate, we have to accept

that 10-year-olds should have the vote and then what's wrong with the world can be finally corrected.

Or take feminism and the #MeToo movement. It's quite obvious that men are to blame and that women have never done anything wrong. Of course, women don't want to buy expensive and attractive clothes and cosmetics themselves, so that they can look beautiful. Absolutely not. No, women are forced by men to dress up in these astonishing ways, and are compelled by patriarchy to accede to male desires. And here of course, importantly, reparations need to be made.

And reparations need to be made elsewhere for somebody else's responsibilities. In Brighton as I write this (and I am sure in the USA something similar is going on), the Labour (socialist) Party is having its annual conference. Dawn Butler, the opposition to

the government's secretary of state for “equality” (in the UK these posts are called “shadows” since they mirror the roles in the actual government), is demanding reparation in London, Glasgow, Liverpool, and Bristol for the slave trade.

## There is self-death involved in blaming others.

Compliantly, Glasgow University, a state-funded university, recently announced it would pay 20 million pounds (approximately, \$25 million) as reparation for its historic connection to the slave trade. Surely, much backslapping and self-congratulation by the university's senior elite on their palpable virtue, but who exactly is paying this money? The university? The senior elite themselves? Actually,

the taxpayer is paying it; that is, I am myself contributing to it.

## The Sins of the Father

Do I feel responsible for the slave trade? No, I do not. I am actually against slavery and against racism, but I am also against this insidious methodology of blaming “others” by creating mobs demanding this and demanding that.

To put this in another context, one of the most wonderful innovations of the Judaic law when it emerged from Israel was the somewhat revolutionary idea that children were not to be punished for sins of their parents and vice versa.

This point was made explicit in Ezekiel 18:20: “The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity.”

In the ancient Middle East and elsewhere in the world, as well as currently in various places, whole families are eliminated in judicial executions or pogroms; it was customary to wipe them out and everyone (that is, their slaves, servants, or allies) who might subsequently pose a threat. Indeed, the Bible itself gives several brilliant examples of this process. For example, we learn in Esther 9:25 that when Haman's evil plan to destroy the Jews is unraveled, the king, Ahasuerus, orders “that he [Haman] and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.”

Retribution, reparation stops with the actual perpetrator(s), otherwise the process is endless.

Individually, of course, this does not

mean that we should not contribute to the well-being of others, especially the disadvantaged, and take responsibility for helping them; after all, all religions advocate compassion. But this is quite different from the collective blame game that is entirely political in nature.

## The Self-Maiming Sin of Blaming

Blaming others, then, is the vice besetting what's wrong with the world. In fact, it is one of the triumvirate of psychopathologies (along with projection and denial) that worst afflict us as human beings. If we consider briefly for a moment the story of Adam and Eve in the garden at the beginning, when they were perfect, we find in the fall of mankind all three of the triumvirate of psychopathologies there in virulent form. For now, let us just consider blame.

Having eaten the forbidden fruit, Adam blames Eve, and Eve blames the serpent. In other words, they together and individually are not responsible for their actions.

Blame and blaming may be said to be the most endemic, the most pernicious, and the most destructive of all the psychological vices that beset mankind; it is the kingpin of all that is negative within us. Small wonder, then, that it wreaks such havoc around us. And it is very difficult to counter.

It is little appreciated, but every time we blame, we are quite literally killing ourselves; there is self-death involved in blaming others. For when

we blame others or someone, we are denying a part of reality that has been created, and saying that we are not part of it. Essentially, we are denying ourselves as co-creators of reality and the acceptance of things as they are.

This is why blame is a kind of blasphemy: We are denying our godlike powers to co-create.

In short, we are exiting and isolating ourselves from the Consciousness that drives the universe and of which we are a part. In theological parlance: We are heading for hell, but in this secular environment now, we need to understand hell not (only) as a place beyond life, but as a state of mind we enter in the here and now.

Chesterton, then, leads us away from all this. What's wrong? Me. I am wrong, and what am I going to do about that? To be clear, this is not about beating myself up, generating low self-esteem through self-criticism; it is exactly the opposite. It is taking responsibility for myself and my contributions. It is the only way that is really sustainable.

*James Sale is an English businessman whose company, Motivational Maps Ltd., operates in 14 countries. He is the author of over 40 books on management and education from major international publishers including Macmillan, Pearson, and Routledge. As a poet, he won First Prize in The Society of Classical Poets' 2017 competition and recently spoke at the group's first symposium held at New York's Princeton Club.*

**Blame and blaming may be said to be the most endemic, the most pernicious, and the most destructive of all the psychological vices that beset mankind.**





“Antigone Condemned to Death by Creon,” 1845, Giuseppe Diotti. Oil on canvas.

## And Still She Speaks to Us: Truth and Beauty in ‘Antigone’

JEFF MINICK

Truth. Beauty. Timelessness.

These three elements exist in any great work of art. Though most of us are neither learned in epistemology nor trained in aesthetics, we possess an eye for truth and beauty in art. We feel overwhelmed when we first encounter Michelangelo’s “David” or Caravaggio’s “The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew,” though the difference in these pieces—the sheer size and calm aspect of the enormous statue versus the terror and violence of the canvas—tells us that beauty comes in many guises.

Along with beauty, great art speaks truth to its audience. Here again, definitions prove elusive, but the artist’s vision and the skill demonstrated in the creation of that vision speak to our minds and hearts, eliciting emotions like joy or sorrow. Even if just for a moment, we share with the artist the profound truth of what it means to be human.

John Keats understood this union when he wrote:

Truth is beauty, beauty truth,  
That is all ye know on earth, and all  
ye need to know.

In “Antigone,” Sophocles’s play about a girl determined to give her brother a proper burial, despite the king’s orders to the contrary, truth and beauty blend together, creating a masterpiece that even after 25 centuries has much to teach us today.

Beauty

I have taught “Antigone” to high school students, and just this past week read the play once again. Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald are the translators, and the book in which their version appears is the text I once used in the classroom. X.J. Kennedy’s “Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama.” “Literature” is a marvelous, fat compendium; I often pick it up, read from it here and there, and remember the happy days when I was a teacher.

I mention this anthology because in it, Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” treads directly on the heels of “Antigone.” In “Hamlet,” we find the Bard’s lush flowerbeds of blank verse: the lengthy descriptions, the wit and wordplay, the soliloquies, the stage-of-ten-busy-and-tumultuous-with-characters.

In striking contrast stands “Antigone,” a drama as stark in its beauty as the mountains of the Aegean. Only a few actors people the stage of Sophocles, and the playwright keeps description to a minimum. Within just a few lines of the play’s opening scene, Antigone is telling her sister Ismene that she intends to bury their brother Polyneices, despite

King Creon’s declaration that Polyneices is a traitor and that “his body must lie in the fields, a sweet treasure for carrion birds to find as they search for food.”

Because of the barebones writing, the plot of “Antigone” moves at a fast clip, with Antigone soon arrested for sprinkling dust and wine on her brother’s body. King Creon passes the sentence of death on her even though Antigone is his niece and Creon’s son, Haimon, loves her. The king incarcerates her in a cave, where she dies by her own hand; the grief-stricken Haimon commits suicide, followed by the suicide of his mother. Left alone, King Creon admits, “Whatever my hands have touched has come to nothing.”

The Choragos, the head of the chorus, then ends the play with four simple lines directed to the audience:

There is no happiness where there is  
no wisdom;  
No wisdom but in submission to the  
gods.  
Big words are always punished,  
And proud men in old age learn to be  
wise.

The end of “Hamlet” brings a squadron of deaths as well, but the farewell is prolonged and ripe with description.

Yet both works are charged with their own particular beauty.

Truth

The conflict in “Antigone” is greater than the battle of wills between the princess and king. Antigone stands on the side of custom and the will of the gods. Creon represents the state and earthly laws. When Creon says to her, “And yet you dared defy the law,” Antigone replies:

I dared.  
It was not god’s proclamation. That  
final Justice.  
That rules the world below makes no  
such law.

Sophocles reveals his artistry by refusing to stack the deck against Creon in these arguments. Several times, the king points out that obedience to the law is a necessity for any well-run government, at one point shouting, “Anarchy, anarchy! Show me a greater evil!”

Yet in the end, it is Antigone who wins this debate. The soothsayer Teiresias and the Choragos convince Creon to give way, and he goes himself to remove her from the sealed cave, only to arrive too late to prevent her death.

In “On Moral Fiction,” which caused a literary ruckus on its publication in 1978, John Gardner launched an attack on relativism in our modern arts, writing, “What we generally get in our books and

films is bad instruction: escapist models or else moral evasiveness, or, worse, cynical attacks on traditional values such as honesty, love of country, marital fidelity, work, and moral courage.”

Antigone as created by Sophocles serves as an example of moral courage. In his artistry—his juxtaposition of ideas, his language, the pacing of the drama—Sophocles also gives us some universal truths. He addresses the conflict between individual conscience and the state, but he also reaches even deeper into what it means to be fully human, allowing us to perceive certain universal truths of the heart and soul: a respect for the Divine and a love for family as opposed to the power and danger of arrogance.

Timelessness

To endure, great art must speak across time and culture. Sophocles won fame in Greece for his plays, and the very fact that his dramas are still performed, studied, and anthologized today bears witness to their relevance to our time. Here are a few examples of that relevance from “Antigone.”

Many Americans find a tension between their duties to their God and their duties to the state. The Christian baker who was sued for refusing to make a cake for a gay wedding is just one such an example.

From Antigone we also catch a glimpse of the Greek version of political correctness. Though her fellow Thebans admire her for her filial devotion and her courage to stand for the good, they are fearful of defending her. At one point, she says to Creon:

I should have praise and honor for  
what I have done.  
All these men here would praise me  
Were their lips not frozen shut with  
fear of you.



“Antigone Buries Polyneices,” 1825, by Sébastien Norblin. National School of Fine Arts, Paris.

And when Haimon pleads with his father to suspend Antigone’s sentence of death, he reminds us of one of the causes of our own poisonous political and cultural environment:

I beg you, do not be unchangeable:  
Do not believe that you alone can be  
right.  
The man who thinks that,  
The man who maintains that only he  
has the power  
To reason correctly, the gift to speak,  
the soul—  
A man like that, when you know  
him, turns out empty.  
A reminder to us all about the value  
of humility.

Antigone also reminds her sister and the audience of the value of honor, a word we hear little of these days outside of the military. “I am not afraid of the danger,” she tells Ismene. “If it means death, it will not be the worst of deaths—death without honor.” She reminds her audience, in this case us, that there are worse fates than death and that honor matters.

In his Preface to “Literature,” X.J. Kennedy writes: “To leap over the wall of the self, to look through another’s eyes—this is valuable experience, which literature offers.”

If we leap over those walls, if we look hard enough through the eyes of Antigone, we may well find ourselves looking into a mirror.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C., Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See [JeffMinick.com](http://JeffMinick.com) to follow his blog.

US-PO

ARTIST PROFILE

## Grit and Humility Fuel Dancer Victor Li’s Rise to the Top

CATHY HE

MIDDLETOWN, NEW YORK—Mental grit and a drive to constantly move forward have led Victor Li to where he is today—principal dancer with the world’s premier classical Chinese dance company.

Every year, Li performs before tens of thousands of audience members around the world with Shen Yun Performing Arts, a New York-based dance company whose mission is to revive China’s 5,000-year civilization through the arts.

Sometimes, he’s a Confucian scholar meditating on the meaning of life, and at other times, an imperial soldier defending the kingdom.

Through soaring flips, poised extensions, and penetrating facial expressions, Li seeks to convey the spirit behind the characters and stories he’s presenting on stage.

For the principal dancer, it’s about “giving your all into every movement you do,” he said.

Each movement, in turn, is a culmination of years of arduous training in one of the world’s most comprehensive dance systems.

Classical Chinese dance is an ancient art form, originating from martial arts and refined over thousands of years in the sphere of Chinese opera. Alongside complicated flips and tumbling techniques, dancers are expected to master a system of movements and expressions rounded out with the nuances of stage acting.

The Toronto-raised Li recalls being a laid-back child when he arrived to receive instruction at Fei Tian Academy of the Arts, the dance school affiliated with the company.

Early Years and Training

His early years of training were not a smooth ride. Li confessed to not being the strongest kid on the block, so the process of priming his body was tough. But it was the mental challenges that were the hardest to tackle—like overcoming his fear of falling when

learning tumbling techniques.

“You need to be very clear on what you’re doing when you’re upside down in the air,” Li said.

The dancer explained that he has to have a clear mind and focus because, as he said, “If I’m thinking too much, I might get scared.”

And even when he does fall—which can happen quite often during practice, according to Li—it’s about picking yourself up and trying again.

“My first thought is, ‘It’s OK, just get up off the floor,’” he said.

This tenacity has paid off. Li subsequently won the Bronze Award in the Adult Male Division in 2016 at the NTD 7th International Classical Chinese Dance Competition, followed by Silver in 2018 at the NTD 8th International Classical Chinese Dance Competition.

**Mental toughness is also a trait shared by the historical characters Li has depicted on stage.**

Grit and Humility

Mental toughness is also a trait shared by the historical characters Li has depicted on stage. In 2016, he portrayed Emperor Kangxi (1654–1722) of the Qing Dynasty in the story-based dance “Defending the Throne.” In the piece, the 16-year-old ruler defeats a power-hungry general who is after the throne, by using his wits rather than brawn. By devising a plan and biding his time, Kangxi manages to entrap the general and foil his plans.

Li said he prepares for his roles by researching the historical figures he portrays to learn about their characteristics and how they behaved. For fictional characters, he endeavors to “portray the character depending on how we want to portray the moral of the story,” he said.

The stories that Li performs are under-



THE EPOCH TIMES

Victor Li in his 2018 performance for the NTD International Classical Chinese Dance Competition. He won second place.

girded by traditional Chinese values and principles, informed by Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian teachings.

Humility is a common trait in the characters Li portrays, including an archer in the 2018 program who was bestowed with extraordinary archery skills by the divine. Even after acquiring supernatural abilities, the archer does not show off and stays humble, earning the respect of his peers.

Li said he also tries to apply these values, including humility, in his everyday life. He doesn’t let being principal dancer get to his head, because he sees the role as a responsibility to both his fellow dancers and the audience members.

Besides, he said, “I could improve so much more, so I feel you can’t be full of yourself.” With each year, Li performs in more pieces as principal dancer, as the standard becomes higher and higher, so “the only thing I can do is really push myself harder now,” he said.

He said that despite the challenges, he is reminded of his purpose when he sees the faces of the patrons at the end of the performance.

“I feel really touched sometimes when I see the audience,” he said. “I feel like it’s all worth it—everything was worth it.”



DAI BING/THE EPOCH TIMES

THEATER REVIEW

## Where the Impossible and the Whimsical Meet

JUDD HOLLANDER

NEW YORK—Any good magician can confound his or her audience. But orchestrating things so those attending are nothing less than completely delighted at being completely fooled is an added plus. Such is the case with Derren Brown’s “Secret,” a wonderfully entertaining offering of the unexpected, currently setting up shop at the Cort Theatre on Broadway.

An expert in the field of psychological manipulation, Brown is also an excellent student of human nature. Specifically, he’s able to pick up on the ticks, movements, and tension people give off when they’re trying not to reveal anything—from the way shoulders might unconsciously droop in response to a question to the manner in which they might grip an object in their hands, or why they choose to hold the object in one hand instead of the other in the first place!

It’s this information, born from years of experience, which Brown uses to draw his audience into the performance. All the while, he’s putting forth a series of variables that seemingly have nothing to do with one another, but all of which combine to bring each segment presented to a totally engrossing conclusion.

Genial and somewhat imposing, Brown comes off not so much as a man of mystery, but rather as a sort of self-deprecating figure one might meet at a neighborhood bar

“Derren Brown: Secret”

Cort Theatre  
138 W. 48th St.  
New York

Running Time  
2 hours, 30 minutes  
(one intermission)

Closes  
Jan. 4, 2020

Tickets  
212-239-6200 or  
[DerrenBrownSecret.com](http://DerrenBrownSecret.com)

**Brown is an excellent student of human nature.**



Magician Derren Brown makes a cordial host in his one-man show “Derren Brown: Secret.”

It can be safely noted that Brown spins a wonderful tale about a major influence in his youth that spurred his interest into the unknowable. A banana also plays a pivotal role in the show, as do various colored Frisbees. As to what exactly the show’s title refers to, that will be explained, eventually.

Despite the performance’s rather long running time, I’m hard-pressed to find any place where the show feels padded with extraneous effects or repetitive presentations. Each of the bits are intricately plotted, with the attention to detail yielding something far more satisfying than simply making something disappear before the audience’s eyes or pulling a rabbit out of a hat. The payoffs at the end of each segment are all worth the wait.

As Brown points out early on, we are all alone. Each of us is locked in our own separate head. It’s Brown’s ability to get into other people’s heads via observation and suggestion that makes the performance nothing less than delightful, even as he pulls the proverbial rug out from under his audience time and time again.

He is completely deserving of the standing ovation he receives at the end of the show. “Derren Brown: Secret” is one Broadway offering that you definitely do not want to miss!

Judd Hollander is a reviewer for [Stagebuzz.com](http://Stagebuzz.com) and a member of the [Drama Desk](http://DramaDesk.com) and the [Outer Critics Circle](http://OuterCriticsCircle.com). He can be reached at [bnchpeop@aol.com](mailto:bnchpeop@aol.com)



FILM REVIEW

# A Dire Documentary About an ‘Extinction in Real Time’

IAN KANE

When I was 17, I accompanied my father on a sailing odyssey from San Diego to Puerto Vallarta. After getting lost at sea, we made it back to the Baha coastline before beginning our voyage across the beautiful Sea of Cortez.

During the sail, dolphins would appear near the bow of our boat, thrusting their gray bodies in and out of the foamy swells. I saw other fish that looked like dolphins, but my father corrected me. “Those are porpoises; they’re closely related to dolphins,” he told me.

Looking back, I would have never imagined that the lush, marine life-abundant Sea of Cortez would serve as the stage for director Richard Ladkani’s new film, “Sea of Shadows.” When I initially read the title, I imagined a noir-crime drama or edgy political thriller, not a wildlife documentary.

Instead of covering illegal elephant poaching as he did in 2016’s “The Ivory Game,” Ladkani’s latest documentary (co-directed by Sean Bogle and Matthew Podolsky) serves as a similar call to action, but it focuses on another endangered species.

**The Bad Guys**

One of the most prized creatures of the Sea of Cortez is known as



A vaquita, its species on the brink of extinction, in “Sea of Shadows.”

the totoaba. These are large marine fish that contain gaseous swim bladders, revered in China for their circulatory- and fertility-enhancing properties.

Mexico officially outlawed totoaba fishing in 1975, after the totoaba had been overfished. But that didn’t halt China’s demand for the fish’s bladders, which are apparently so potent in their medicinal properties that they’re nicknamed “the cocaine of the sea.”

Enter a dark alliance more sinister than any crime-thriller Hollywood could ever dream up.

In an effort to fill China’s voracious appetite for totoaba bladders, the Sinaloa drug cartel joined forces with the Chinese mafia in Tijuana. This unholy alliance has

fueled rampant illegal fishing of the totoaba, which, in turn, has led to an unexpected and even more pressing issue.

Caught in the nets of the gulf fishermen is the world’s most endangered marine mammal, a species of porpoise called the vaquita. As these beautiful animals are entangled in the nets and drown, their numbers have drastically fallen to the lower double digits.

**The Good Guys and Those Caught in Between**

The film opens with the brave men of the Sea Shepherd, who risk great peril in order to locate bands of poachers. Weaponless, the vessel’s crew, including intrepid drone pilot Jack Hutton, sends the coordinates of any successfully tracked poacher’s ship to the Mexican navy, in the desperate hopes that the military will actually do something.

But there’s a lot of money flowing around the gulf. Dogged Mexican journalist Carlos Loret de Mola knows all too well of the illicit funds trickling through his country. Although he covers stories that link government and industry figures who are in the pockets of Mexican

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF TERRA MATER FACTUAL STUDIOS

cartels and Chinese traffickers, and broadcasts these reports to millions, little seems to ever get done about the increasingly dire situation.

But don’t tell that to Andrea Crosta, the executive director and co-founder of Earth League International (ELI). Many of ELI’s employees are intelligence professionals and former law enforcement personnel who engage in covert operations in order to investigate the illegal poaching and its ties to China. A dangerous task, to say the least.

Then there are the stories of the local Mexican fishermen, who aren’t allowed to use the fishing nets that they used in the past. Their need to feed their families is very real and conflicts with a need to save the fisheries, and likewise threatens the overall sustainability of marine life in the area.

There’s also the conservationist perspective, embodied by veterinarian Dr. Cynthia Smith. An American with the lofty goal of somehow corralling and capturing a few of the remaining vaquita, Dr. Smith hopes to relocate any of the endangered sea mammals she can, in order to nurture them back to a

decent population level. However unrealistic her goals may be, you can see the unwavering passion that this woman is imbued with.

The film made me curious about elements that it merely touches on. Why are there so many Chinese criminal elements in Mexico? How long have they been aligned with Mexican drug cartels?

I feel as though there could be an entire feature documentary or, even better, a reality TV series solely dedicated to investigating these murky, transnational matters.

In any event, “Sea of Shadows” is a wrenching exposé on a little-known species of porpoise that is fading out of existence—as Crosta calls it, an “extinction in real time”—and the people who are, against all odds, trying to stop that from happening. The film makes it clear that the good guys are vastly outnumbered by the bad guys.

But in what war worth fighting for have the numbers really mattered?

*Ian Kane is a filmmaker and author based out of Los Angeles. To see more, visit DreamFlightEnt.com*

**‘Sea of Shadows’**

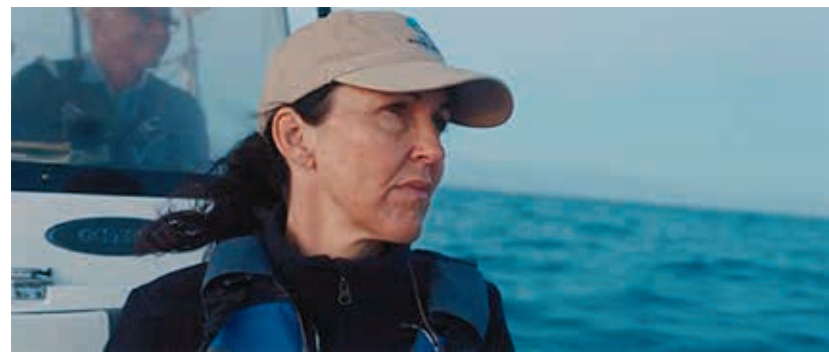
**Director**  
Richard Ladkani, Sean Bogle

**Running Time**  
1 hour, 45 minutes

**Rated**  
PG-13

**Release Date**  
Sept. 27

★★★★★



Dr. Cynthia Smith’s passion to help the vaquita is inspiring, in “Sea of Shadows.”

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