

‡6 Scrawlings

A Shorts

A1 In 1990, rich Japanese businessmen purchased¹ a Van Gogh, a Renoir, and Peru. Peru was cheapest.

A2 One of the foundations of the search for wisdom is so simple that it can be crudely expressed in just a few lines: the most important -ism isn't conservatism, leftism, Darwinism, theism, or whateverism. The central -ism is: Truthism. Place one's prime loyalty there, and hold all else contingent on that.

A3 Stanislavski & Strasberg may have been great acting-instructors, but our 2 most effective dramatic-talent clinics are: Congress and prison. They differ² in that: good acting gets you into one — and out of the other.

B Son of Read-My-Lips: Those Bleeding-Heart Republicans

B1 Before '88 election: [a] Bush decries Dems' weekend release of allegedly-reformed criminal Willie Horton (whose idea of reform was to turn rapist), and [b] Bush pledges that no tax-increases would rape US pockets (by billions/month).

B2 Bush in office: raises taxes. Now, for the '92 campaign, remorseful Bush swears:³ I-won't-do-it-again! Social workers everywhere want to learn: how, in just 4 years, has Bush rehabbed Willie Horton from scorned Lib-symbol to fave speech-writer?

C Archimedean Santa

C1 What theme do these items have in common: [1] a wishbone, [2] a B.F.Skinner superstitious pigeon, [3] a US election?

C2 Answer: just pull the little lever, and all your dreams will come true.

¹ The Van Gogh cost over \$80,000,000; the Renoir, over \$50,000,000. The bill for winning Peru's Presidency was not reported, but the (over-the-table) cost of a Presidential campaign in the much larger US is only a few hundred million dollars, so a Peruvian election probably costs just a few million. Japanese may occasionally have paid more for another of their favorite Western land-acquisitions: US golf-courses. The Latin American nation of Peru has an area of over a million square kilometers. A few hours ago, its population was 22 million people.

² I risk insulting convicts by estimating that Congress & prison are about equally honest arenas. They are also equally male: both c.95% men, though the US population is c.51% female. Thought experiment: imagine the media's hysterics if a 95%-white Congress were representing, say, a 51% black general population. (See below: §D.) On the other hand, feminist organizations have been equally unquick to complain about a society that is (by lobby-logic) so anti-male that it locks up c.20 times as many men as women. Perhaps we should apply the Affirmative-Action quota approach — spring men (& sentence women) until both sexes' jail populations are roughly at par? (Similarly, young men are routinely charged higher auto insurance rates than women the same age. No one seriously regards this as part of an anti-man conspiracy.)

³ *Nightline* 1992/1/15. And then there was *USA Today's* 1992/9/10 headline (in which the President of the US comes off like a repentant 10-year-old), BUSH: NO TAX HIKES AGAIN, "EVER, EVER".

D The Inequity Inequity: Rainbow MENu

The unspoken lesson of the 1991 Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas affair⁴ was that, in the US, the “race card” trumps the “gender card”.⁵ How many more decades must pass before TV ’snews permits discussion of the lethally-revealing question: why do ethnic groups rate higher priority than women? Why are gross gender-inequities (in Congress, the Church, etc) of so much less urgent interest to the press than are ethnic inequities? The contrast is *itself* the worst prejudice-related inequity in the US. So, naturally, that very fact is publicly undiscussed. Items:

D1 Women got the vote decades after southern black men.

D2 The US elects to political office more male Democrats, male Republicans, male WASPS, male Irish, male Italians, male Episcopalians, male Methodists, male Baptists, male Catholics, male homosexuals, male blacks, male Hispanics than women — though all these groups have (*even in combine*) smaller numbers than women.

D3 There have been several Jewish justices on the US Supreme Court, 2 blacks, but only 1 female. Yet, in the general population, Jews represent about 1/40th of the US, blacks about 1/8, while women are slightly over 1/2. (Wasn’t the 1776 revolt against King George fought over representation?) Thus, compared to women, blacks have been 8 times better-represented on the Court; and Jews, roughly 50 times better-represented. (One finds similar proportions on most other influential boards, panels, etc. E.g., a typical committee will have, say, *x* male WASPs, 1 male black, 1 male Catholic, etc. — and 1 female. Hey, everybody’s represented, so everybody’s happy, right?)⁶

D4 Curiously, women’s-issue groups behave as if they believe that their salvation lies in supposedly smartpolitics alliances with the very same rainbow spectrum of ethnic-polishing lobbies which are responsible for such outrageous disproportionalities.⁷ Central question (which, perhaps revealingly,⁸ has not been publicly asked): *why bother with alliances when your own group already comprises over 50% of the electorate?* Are women as innumerate as their detractors charge?

D5 Feminists also court political alliance with the male homosexual lobby (whose private attitude towards women is not abundantly respectful). Perhaps that’s why no feminist has yet gone public with an irresistible . . . query: is there any connection between [a] Bush

⁴ I have my private opinion as to who was telling the truth — but must say that it would set an intolerable precedent to upset an impending appointment, on the basis of an account of unwitnessed events (of 10⁷ antiquity) when not a scrap of written notes was kept by the accuser — and when it appears that she took the percs (that attached to tolerating alleged verbal abuse) as long as they lasted, and only went public after that well went dry.

⁵ E.g., at least the first version (vetoed by Bush) of the recent Civil Rights Bill placed a fiscal cap on damages women could collect from gender-discrimination suits, but no such cap for race-discrimination suits. Who thinks up insults like these?

⁶ Lobbies’ insatiability regarding proportions reminds one of the argument 23^m into the classic 1963 film *It’s a Mad Mad . . . World*. The US Senate’s bitty-state-placating disproportionate representation-math originated just so.

⁷ In the US a generation ago, labor unionism was as sacred a media cow as today’s familiar special interest lobbies (e.g., military, capitalism, AIDS carriers, etc). What went wrong? Perhaps it was simply numbers: it’s hard to exploit a society whose masses are aroused, informed, & fighting-mad. So, vis-à-vis rulers, the women’s movement has the same downside as labor: there are simply too many women. If they get riled, there’s trouble ahead; so, the numerically-small lobbies are tolerated, but not the potentially massive ones.

⁸ Are most women still falling for the media-dangled short-term-easy escapist myth (implicit in ubiquitous ads for cosmetics, creams, & shampoos) of: seductress-wife as a career? If so, then feminism is faltering not because it isn’t using its numerical advantage, but because there *is* no such advantage — i.e., feminism unfortunately doesn’t represent most women. (And that may explain why the feminist movement is embarrassed about admitting why it believes it must for now — supposedly temporarily — ally itself with those above-cited lobbies which merely sap its potential force.) One can easily blame that situation on men, but the decent heart of the feminist movement might generate more longterm female progress by stimulating women’s own substantial intellect & ambition (and principled renunciation of using the superficial feminine-wiles-crutch for short-term gain and-or job-advancement) than by becoming eternal-victim-paranoid about men. (But: which pitch creates bestsellers & raises lobby-funds?) Fact: admirably adless, issue-oriented *MS* magazine’s subscription numbers are many times smaller than beauty-myth-selling *Cosmo*’s. Until the melting of that scandalous ratio (which is hard to blame on men, since both mags sell largely to women), no legislative solution can substantially improve women’s status.

running the most anti-female⁹ US presidency of the century (whose *prime* obsession¹⁰ was being packing the US Supreme Court with men he’s hoping will return women to pure baby-factorydom),¹¹ and [b] Bush picking that cute little boy for his Vice-Presidential mate? (Granted, such a question is inexcusably prejudicial, since the undoubted truth is that Bush selected Quayle for his mental depth & celerity.)

D6 Not all US jobs are prejudicedly perceived as male-preserve; e.g., in most US neighborhoods, male prostitutes are even less welcome than female whores. Thus, feminists, making their move for power, might well begin by attacking the nation’s top male prostitution ring. Congress is, after all, only about 5% female; thus, any woman who votes for largely male candidates (until the House is roughly 50% female)¹² fully deserves the subservient rôle her vote invites.

E Robert Newton & the Muffia

E1 Physicist Robert Russell Newton died in 1991 June. He was the retired Supervisor of the Space Sciences Division of the Johns Hopkins U Applied Physics Lab. I am proud to have known him, in good times and rough ones. He is survived by his 2nd wife Gene Newton and several children by his late 1st wife, Doris. RN was (along with O Gingerich & Lord Hoskin) the scholar most responsible for unleashing the new journal *DIO*. (Happily, RN lived long enough to read issue#1 and see it widely distributed and well received.) His Ptolemy researches got vile treatment from the Otto Neugebauer-Muffia oldboyperson-clique (for reasons which were, at bottom, careerist and thus largely fiscal — which make them particularly repugnant in light of the pseudointellectual veils used to hide this reality). Nonetheless, he remained admirably jocular about his various archon-smoothing enemies. (I shall never forget his gentle, goodnatured attitude towards them, nor their ugly¹³ conniving to harm him as much as possible, for selfish professional advancement. This while avoiding symposium-debate while he lived. His death now renders it impossible ever to make substantial restitution to him.) A person of high mental abilities and wide culture, Newton became in his later years a rare combination of physicist and intellectual archaeologist, which resulted in a series of books (published by Johns Hopkins Univ Press or Univ Md) which used pretelescopic astronomical observations to determine the history of the Earth’s spin and revolution. If I were to specify the single quality which I most admired in him, and which ensured a firm friendship (despite numerous disagreements), it would be: when mobs of inferior minds yelped at him in unison,¹⁴ and scrambled to get in line to attack him (in order to cover the shame of the exposed archons they kiss up to), he had not the slightest interest either in muting the boldness of his theories or in politically compromising with Nibelungs. Now that he is gone, I realize all the more how rare are such

⁹ One can ask women not to be too paranoid (as I do at fn 8), but when *MS* magazine finds it necessary to ban ads from its pages in order to acquire genuine editorial freedom, one has to guess that it has learned (from long experience with advertisers’ pressure against outspoken writing) that numerous corporate rulers of the US are as anti-choice as Bush is.

¹⁰ The lack of perspective is bizarre. There is a remark of Russell’s that applies: over a millennium ago, when civilization was collapsing, intellectually & economically, into the Dark Ages, what was Christianity’s prime public concern? — the preservation of virginity.

¹¹ Will society’s eventual adoption of extra-uterine foetal-maturation techniques finally emancipate women? Or trigger their extinction?

¹² Rôle reversal: I’m usually anti-quota, while Congress is usually pro-quota. But each of us makes an exception for Congress itself. Congress’ reasoning is self-evident. So is mine: for most jobs, just let talent & drive tell; but Congress is different, since it is supposed to *represent* groups, in roughly proportional fashion. Regardless, I don’t expect we’ll hear anyone argue that girlpersons don’t belong in Congress because they lack the intellectual necessities.

¹³ See *DIO 1.1*: ¶1 §C6-C8, ¶3 §D3.

¹⁴ Suggested profitable game-plan for Muffia-aspirants: [a] Publicly pretend to find (maybe) some slight merit in RN’s or DR’s work. [b] Watch horrified Muffiosi scurry to woo you away from your heretical error. (See *DIO 1* ¶9 fn 9.) [c] After sufficiently generous persuasion has been bestowed, reconvert back into the secure Muffia fold, to hosannah thanks for your blessed enlightenment.

selfconfidence and courage, in modern academe. Even some among his legion of craven detractors acknowledge that he was the subject of useful controversy. He will be missed.

E2 A critical distinction, commended here (as also that at *DIO 1.1* ¶1 §C12) to the consideration of those following the Ptolemy Controversy: scientists generally reserve the epithet “Incompetent” for those who are simply incapable of performing procedures necessary for the work at hand.¹⁵ It should be understood that Neugebauer-Muffia use of such terms is instead based upon *interpretational* disagreement. That is, difference from Muffia orthodoxy is instinctively equated with incompetence. (See, e.g., *DIO 1.1* ¶5 §D14f & fn 20, or *DictSciBiog 11:201*.)

E3 Noncitation: Robert Newton’s publications on Ptolemy’s fakes started in 1969. But the Neugebauer Muffia’s leading capos refused to cite them until 1977. Eight years. (See, e.g., even Muffia princess Janice Henderson’s evasive piece in *Sky & Telescope 1976/2*.) Why? Simple: only in 1977 did the general public become aware (through articles in *Time* and *Science*) of RN’s findings in this area. Now, if an honest academic critic sees what he regards as erroneous work by a respected scholar, does he handle the problem (until forced to do otherwise) just by sealing off mention of the work & by privately slandering the author? (See *DIO 1.1* ¶1 §C7.) Or does he instead regularly meet the allegedly-errant scholar in polite public discussion at academic gatherings, where the evidential & logical merits of the matter can be rationally discussed? — and where, if the offender is indeed wrong or foolish, this can be demonstrated in an open-adversarial setting, on valid academic grounds. The Muffia preferred the former, censorial approach until 1977, when publicity (temporarily outside its immediate control) gutted this approach’s efficacy, and only then did the Muffia shift tactics and go on the offensive (i.e., switching from private to public slander). This pattern is consistent with an approach (to controversy) which is guided by motives not of integrity and courage but of political power-operation.

F Power People

F1 To observe astronomer 0 Gingerich (now head of Harvard’s Hist.sci Dep’t — and an ideal choice for the post) calling¹⁶ Galileo a “scrambling social climber” is as entertaining¹⁷ as finding (1976/3/12) R.Kargon, sometime *Isis* boardperson, accurately describing a well-known astronomer-historian-politician as “one of the biggest —kissers in the business.” Either of these eminent professors puts me in mind of Montaigne’s observation: he who gossips to you will gossip of you. (I can’t imagine why the next paragraph’s theme should follow so immediately upon admiration of the present paragraph’s magnates.)

F2 The cause of the dreary paucity of original thought in certain scholarship areas’ public discourse is self-evident:

[a] One will not be listened to unless one possesses power.

[b] One cannot attain power without laboring mightily towards its possession.

[c] But this very effort so wipes out one’s time&energy, that there’s insufficient left over for original thought.

[d] Upshot: the power operator labors for decades to get into a position where he can put over his new ideas — and by the time he’s got the power to do so, he has no substantial new ideas.

F3 When an academic biggie-editor & a productive scholar clash: the funniest item, in the bag of standard tactics used to damn the scholar, is the canard that he’s inherently Impossible. (Which may be strictly translated: he won’t kiss editors’ hands, feet, or brains.

¹⁵ I have long made it a personal rule to try to avoid using this unpleasant label; the only exception I can recall in the last decade was in 1989, for a particularly egregious case. And, given the Muffia’s continuing risibility in astronomical calculations, I reserve the option to bring the term out of mothballs in future discussions.

¹⁶ *Scientific American* 247.2:132 (1982/8), p.136.

¹⁷ See ¶8 §C9 or *JHA* 22.2:187 (1991/5).

For archons long spoiled by routine assent, flattery,¹⁸ & bended knee: nongenuflection is Rebellion.) Common-sense-time: who gets his jollies, not from scholarly creativity, but through power games, fights, sadism, etc. — an editor or a scholar?

F4 Continuing a point raised in *DIO 1.1* (¶1 fn 12, §C7, §C12), the base reason that politically-motivated academic gangs systematically refuse to give ANY credit to an “enemy” is: every discovery, publicly assigned to that person, enhances his stature — which thus makes him a more formidable opponent. So: truth & equity be damned — the sort of ethics & priority-perspective one used to associate with gutter-level mobsters, not scholars. But, in certain academic areas, the difference is increasingly blurred.¹⁹

F5 When publicly asserting an unwelcome truth, it is tempting to try working Within-The-System, since this is more pleasant and implicitly optimistic.²⁰ However, [a] The more receptive The System is, the less important the issue. [b] The most important issue is: The System itself.

¹⁸ *Isis* Publications Committeeperson A.Van Helden’s 1990 review of the *Journal for the History of Astronomy* mentions prominently (*Isis* 81.2:298) that “some of the best articles” in the *JHA* just-so-happen to be those of the esteemed *JHA* Editor-for-Life! (And neutral critic Van Helden just-so-happens to be a *JHA* Adv Editor.) Admire, too, 0 Gingerich’s Disraeliesque [Robt.Massey *Dreadnought* 1991 p.21] trowel at work: fn 17. Actually, there was a time when those politician-businessman-scholars (especially British), climbing under archons, had to be alot more unsubtle than even today; though, convincing the vain patron not merely of his generosity, but additionally of his *brilliance* as an intellect & author, is a timeless requirement. E.g. Sir Francis Bacon, Lord Chancellor, Baron Verulam (whose defense to a bribery scandal was the lawyer-olddie that he indeed took bribes — but without effect on his decisions!) dedicated *Great Renewal* (1620) to King James I thusly (emph added): “To our Most Gracious and Mighty Prince and Lord JAMES by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, Etc. Your Gracious and Mighty [DR: aah, didn’t we cover that already?] King, . . . if there be any good in what I have to offer, it may be ascribed to the infinite mercy and goodness of God, and to the felicity of your Majesty’s times . . . the wisest and most learned of kings . . . you who resemble Solomon in so many things — in the gravity of your judgements, in the peacefulness of your reign, in the largeness of your heart, in the noble variety of the books *which you have composed* [DR: like James’ personal 1611 translation of the Bible in his spare time?] May God Almighty long preserve your Majesty! Your Majesty’s Most bounden and devoted Servant, Francis Verulam, Chancellor.” And Jos.Addison similarly prefaced his justly famous *Spectator* (1711) with an even nearer-perfect extended browning-study — the sort of thing which implicitly tells one more about what is required for the attainment of true archon-seraph-hood than anything ever written explicitly. (I quote from an edition, published in 1753, which has been in my family’s library ever since.) The peaks, from *six pages* of slathered ecstasy: “To the Right Honourable John Lord Sommers, Baron of Evesham. My Lord, I should not act the Part of an impartial Spectator, if I Dedicated the following Papers to one who is not of the most consummate and most acknowledged Merit. None but a Person of a finished Character, can be the proper Patron of a Work I know that the Homage I now pay You, is offering a kind of Violence to one who is as solicitous to shun Applause, as he is assiduous to deserve it. . . . While Justice, Candor, Equanimity, a Zeal for the Good of your Country . . . are valuable Distinctions, You are not to expect that the Public will so far comply with your Inclinations, as to forbear celebrating such extraordinary Qualities. It is in vain that you have endeavored to conceal your Share of Merit Do what you will, the present Age will be talking of your Virtues, tho’ Posterity alone will do them Justice. . . . your Lordship, who could bring into the Service of your Sovereign the Arts and Policies of Ancient Greece and Rome; as well as the most exact Knowledge of our own Constitution in particular, and of the interests of Europe in general . . . to enumerate the great Advantages which the Public has received from your Administration, would be a more proper Work for an History than for an Address. . . . I would . . . rather . . . speak of the Pleasure You afford all who are admitted into your Conversation, of Your Elegant Taste in all the Polite Parts of Learning, of Your great Humanity and Complacency of Manners, and of the surprising Influence which is peculiar to You in making every one who converses with your Lordship prefer You to himself, without thinking the less meanly of his own Talents. But if I should take notice of all that might be observed in your Lordship, I should have nothing new to say upon any other Character of Distinction. I am, My Lord, Your Lordship’s most Obedient, most Devoted, Humble Servant, The Spectator.” (Did Addison aim here at unsteadfastness? Poor 0. One is reminded of Rupe’s dream of Jerry’s how-do-you-do-it adulation in the delightful film, “King of Comedy”. It should perhaps be observed that Addison could tell satire from sincerity. And probably knew who couldn’t.) Numerous sects’ religious invocations still retain similar language (though lighter on the shoveling & heavier on the groveling). Which suggests: either established religion is anthropomorphic, or the deity needs shrinking. Why would patrons, kings, or gods be so insecure as to wish or even tolerate such flattery? To his credit, extremely-literate James I demoted Bacon & extremely-literally axed superbutterer & tobacco-pusher W.Raleigh. A king who [a] loathed tobacco & [b] executed (with Bacon’s happy assistance) the very person responsible for introducing that lethal addiction-plague-stench into European civilization, is my kind of royalty.

¹⁹ One recalls Woody Allen’s comment on the famous photo of Will Rogers with Warren Harding: a leader of show business shown with a leader of politics, back in the old days — before the 2 fields merged.

²⁰ Nonviolent revolutions generally produce higher quality results than violent ones. However, the former usually do not occur without fear of the latter.

G Two Party Ping-Pong Pocket-Plumbing

G1 For your home's plumbing needs, you call on plumber A. But he fails you, so you go to plumber B. When plumber B fails,²¹ you don't try plumber C or D or whomever — but instead you go back to trying plumber A. Then, after plumber A lets you down again, you go right back to plumber B, etc.

G2 If you actually did turn your everyday searches for talent into such boring & infantile table-tennis exercises, you'd create, with respect to plumbers A&B:

[a] understandably low regard for your intelligence,

[b] your rapid impoverishment to fund plumbers' mansions, limousines, yachts, & tourist junkets,

[c] behind-the-scenes cartel-collusion-merging of A & B,

[d] a home perpetually agurgle with new demands for plumbers' ministrations.

G3 Yet, sheeplike US voters follow exactly this pattern in their recourse to the two political parties that are taxing them (and their progeny) into economic debtor-imprisonment²² — even as TV 'snews pundit-flunkies assure the plumbees of the sanctity and inherent wisdom of the "Two-Party System".²³

²¹ Unwonted logical exercises: dedicated Dem voters regard the GOP as ghastly. (And I won't say they're wrong.) But none ask: what party's mismanagement so grossed out voters that millions retched and elected *Nixon*. Twice. (That's an indictment that would drive any self-respecting party to suicide. Well, maybe it did, at least in the sense that one can hardly tell Dems from GOPers anymore.) And, instead of moaning about Bush's 1988 Willie Horton ad, why not ask: what party's policies made that ad so effective? (What party ran US cities while they decayed into crime zones?) Answer: the Dems. (And what party's insensitivity to poverty & simple justice so enraged 1932 voters that they turned for decades to the Dems? Answer: the GOP — which swore it would never repeat *that* mistake . . .)

²² The average citizen's ability to save money has been declining for decades in the US — even when salaries rose. Few US citizens have (in savings) more than they owe — especially if their share of the national debt is taken into account. (The national debt is now roughly \$50,000 per 4 person family. And that debt is growing at ordmag 10% — every single year.) Is the US turning into a vast company-store town?

²³ Even allegedly reformist 3rd Parties have become increasingly suspect, starting with L.LaRouche (1976) & J.Anderson (1980) — for the simple reason that 3rd Party C may merely be regular Party A's catspaw, injected to split the vote of (the other) regular party B. In the 1992 campaign, TV 'snews ignored honest 3rd Party possibilities (e.g., Ralph Nader), while grossly rich insider R.Perot's p.r. men & high press contacts have transformed him into an Outsider, a "maverick", i.e., the sort of creature which only MadAve has the nerve to conjure up: The Littleguy's Jillionaire. Perot has served as a useful Pied-Piper lightning-rod, to help keep the two regular parties in clover by diverting (until it was too late for a serious 3rd party to get organized in 1992), harmlessly & fruitlessly, the public's outrage at both GOP & Dems. (Similarly, GOP insider P.Buchanan was sent forth into the GOP primaries as another pseudoMaverick, to drain the dreaded D.Duke vote away into oblivion.) Simple consideration: if TV 'snews builds up a candidate (or, indeed, any Approved Leader of a worrisome lobby, e.g., women) to Credibility status, by providing her or him lots of airtime, then that person is as trustworthy as the benefactor-builder-media itself. (Yes, singular.) The foregoing examples — of orchestration-talent that would tax a Rimsky-Korsakov — are reminiscent of rulers' prime unspoken principle, which Tammany's own Geo. Wash. Plunkitt revealed in 1906. (From his single sentence, one learns more about US democracy than from ten years of civics courses.) Plunkitt: "I don't care who does the electing, so long as I do the nominating."