Passages for Kaplan's Reading Comprehension Workshops

**The following document contains the Reading Comprehension passages used in the Kaplan Reading Comprehension Workshops, located in your online syllabus. The first passage is used only in the Reading Comp Basics Workshop; the latter two are used only in the Reading Comp Advanced Workshop.*

Reading Comprehension Basics Workshop Passage

It is incumbent on those who advise and assist those building new societies to point to the need for institution building beyond concern with political parties, electoral laws, and market mechanisms. Well functioning and enduring democratic systems depend upon a host of institutional arrangements.

Creating these institutions will be a formidable task. The challenge of building democracy sustaining institutions is most acute in the countries of Eastern Europe now working their way out of "real socialism," but it is also a central issue for some non-communist nations in Asia that have spent decades under various forms of authoritarian and dictatorial rule. True, these authoritarian and dictatorial governments have not achieved the degree of penetration of society attained in good part by the communist regimes of Eastern Europe. Neither have they had the propensity to destroy all elements of civil society or to reconstitute only those that served as instruments of the state and its ruling party. Nevertheless, they have been no more hospitable to the growth of many of the institutions and institutional complexes that are associated with democratic political systems and market economies. They too confront a long agenda of institution building before they may be counted as fully formed and functioning democratic societies.

The institutions necessary to sustain and facilitate the functioning of democratic politics and market economies are: free trade unions which reflect the views of their members and work for their interests; free professional associations in all fields of endeavor ranging from philosophy to law, medicine, and engineering; associations based on interest, sentiment, and value ranging from stamp collecting to preserving the environment and independent of the interests of party and state; a free press including radio, television, and other communications media independent of public authority for its support, and whose task is to inform the public; free standing universities and research institutes, in control of their curricula and agendas, in particular being unimpeded in providing critical perspectives on state and society and innovative alternatives to institutions and arrangements that are now in existence; independent religious establishments, voluntary in their membership and support, and free not only to preach and otherwise minister to the spiritual needs of adherents, but also to organize ancillary social and cultural activities.

These are the "conventional" elements of a democratic system, but their being conventional in no way diminishes their importance as basic supports for a democratic political structure. Beyond the conventional, those institutions and institutional complexes without which a democratic society cannot function effectively are a system of law, an institutional framework, and a body of practices dealing with labor disputes, especially for those between large and powerful corporate entities and the representatives of the workers. Without such a system, labor problems will escalate into potentially violent confrontations that threaten public order and may eventually undermine the democratic political structure.

Reading Comprehension Challenge Workshop Passages

Whatever our background or interests, whether religious or scientific, philosophical or psychological, it seems very important for us to understand the nature of mind. At first, mind seems so familiar, simple, easy. But the more we investigate and observe, the deeper and more mysterious mind becomes. It manifests many different forms and faces, and so we sometimes label it "consciousness" and sometimes "awareness." We might use many different words to describe the scope of its influence or to discuss its apparent functioning, but finally, it is very difficult to make mind tangible or to give it shape and to say solidly, "This is exactly what mind is."

Our minds are, in a sense, already completely illumined, capable of seeing truth directly, but we fail to realize this. Instead, our tendency is to dissect each experience with our interpretations rather than experience the present moment directly, totally, and fully. In the same way, to describe mind we must always relate it to some other concept: for example, mind is like this, or consciousness is like that, awareness is good, ego is bad. We try to trap the mind into an imaginary net created by our interpretations of the external world. But as long as we attempt to discover mind through a series of images or concepts about mind, we may only be pointing to the mind that "thinks," the mind that sorts out information computer-style, or the subjective mind which is really just a reflection of the self-image.

Beyond the level of perceptual processes and interpretations- which corresponds roughly to the "subconscious" and which is always experienced by a subject- there is a more pervasive substratum of consciousness, termed "kun-gzhi" in Tibetan or "alayavijnana" in Sanskrit, which is a kind of intrinsic awareness which is not involved in any subject-object duality. Normally, however, we tend to label certain selective elements of our experience and categorize them in terms of a "subject" which perceives some "object" external to our "consciousness." But this sensory-intellectual awareness is not what Buddhism means by "mind," for mind as such is not limited by any conceptions or ideas we might have about it. Mind itself has no substance. It has no form, no position, no characteristics, no beginning, no end. It is beyond reasoning and so-called logical processes, beyond time and beyond all existence.

The technique of DNA fingerprinting is based on sequence polymorphisms that occur in the human genome. Sequence polymorphisms are slight sequence differences in DNA that occur from individual to individual, typically once every few hundred base pairs. Although every individual's DNA has sequence polymorphisms, each specific difference from the consensus human genome sequence is generally present in only a fraction of the human population.

Sequence polymorphisms can occur virtually anywhere on the human genome, but some occur at the recognition sites of restriction enzymes: DNA-cleaving biological molecules that generate DNA fragments. What results is a variation from individual to individual in the size of certain DNA fragments produced by digestion with a particular restriction enzyme. These size differences are referred to as restriction fragment length polymorphisms, or RFLPs.

The detection of RFLPs relies on a specialized hybridization procedure called Southern blotting. In this procedure, DNA fragments from the digestion of genomic DNA by restriction enzymes are first separated according to size by electrophoresis in an agarose gel. Next, the gel is soaked in an alkali solution which denatures the double-stranded DNA and separates the strands. The DNA fragments are then transferred to nitrocellulose paper in such a way as to reproduce on paper the distribution of fragments in the gel. The paper is then immersed in a solution containing a radioactively labeled DNA probe-a short segment of single-stranded DNA with a sequence complementary to a particular genomic sequence. The genomic DNA fragments to which the probe hybridizes are revealed by autoradiography.

The genomic DNA sequences used in these tests are generally regions containing repetitive DNA, which are common in the genomes of higher eukaryotes. The number of repeated units in such DNA varies from individual to individual. If a suitable probe is chosen, the pattern of bands in such an experiment can be distinctive for each individual tested. If several probes are used, the test can be made selective enough to positively identify a single individual in the human population.