Exercise 01

Unless we are very, very careful, we doom each other by holding onto images of one another based on preconceptions that are in turn based on indifference to what is other than ourselves.

This indifference can be, in its extreme, a form of murder and seems to me a rather common phenomenon.

We claim autonomy for ourselves and forget that in so doing we can fall into the tyranny of defining other people as we would like them to be.

By focusing on what we choose to acknowledge in them, we impose an insidious control on them.

I notice that I have to pay careful attention in order to listen to others with an openness that allows them to be as they are, or as they think themselves to be.

The shutters of my mind habitually flip open and click shut, and these little snaps form into patterns I arrange for myself.

The opposite of this inattention is love, is the honoring of others in a way that grants them the grace of their own autonomy and allows mutual discovery.

Exercise 02

Designing, building, operating, upgrading, and eventually retiring infrastructure projects is an expensive process.

As aging infrastructure is repaired and retrofitted, and as new infrastructure is constructed, incorporating future risks from climate change impacts into their design, construction, and operation must become routine.

Failing to take those risks into account will likely lead to increased maintenance and operating costs and shortened service life.

Failing to screen projects for climate resilience will lead to more waste and more infrastructure collapse.

The stronger infrastructure required may come with a significant upfront cost.

But employing thoughtful design strategies can allow for making relatively modest resilience investments now, while still planning for more extreme events down the road.

This approach could well be cheaper than having to retrofit the infrastructure from scratch if conditions worsen beyond expectations.

Exercise 03

All musics have a history, and all music changes, has always been changing, though at various rates and not always in the same direction.

It would be foolish to assume that the music of India, because it is largely melodic and without harmony, somehow represents an “earlier stage” through which Western music has already passed, or that Europeans, in the days when they lived in tribes, had music similar to that of Native Americans.

Musics do not uniformly change from simple to complex.

Each music has its own unique history related to the history of its culture, to the way people adapt to their natural and social environment.

The patterns we may discern in the world’s music history usually have to do with the relationships of cultures to one another.

Thus, in the twentieth century, as Western-derived culture has affected most others, most non-Western musics now show some influences of Western music.

However, the results of this influence vary from culture to culture.

Exercise 04

Archaeology is a mode of production of the past.

This would seem to be recognized by those many archaeologists and textbooks that talk at length of archaeological techniques – archaeology seen as technology.

The past has left remains, and they decay in the ground.

According to their interest, an archaeologist works on the material remains to make something of them.

So excavation is invention/discovery or sculpture where archaeologists craft remains of the past into forms which are meaningful.

The archaeological ‘record’ is, accordingly, not a record at all, but made, not given, ‘data’.

‘The past’ is gone and lost, and a fortiori, through the equivocality of things and the character of society as constituted through meaning, never existed as a definitive entity ‘the present’ anyway.

An archaeologist has a raw material, the remains of the past, and turns it into something – data, a report, set of drawings, a museum exhibition, an archive, and perhaps that which is termed ‘knowledge of the past’.

This is a mode of production.

Exercise 05

An educational institution that I have been associated with recently went through a particularly traumatic time when the credibility of the administration was questioned by the faculty and staff.

Various organizational consultants were interviewed to facilitate a “healing” process.

Most of the consultants spoke of making the necessary structural changes to create a culture of trust.

The institution finally hired a consultant whose attitude was that organizational structure has nothing to do with trust.

Interpersonal relations based on mutual respect and an atmosphere of goodwill are what creates a culture of trust.

Would you rather work as part of a school with an outstanding reputation or work as part of a group of outstanding individuals?

Many times these two characteristics go together, but if one had to make a choice, I believe that most people would opt to work with outstanding individuals.

Exercise 06

We all have been blessed with intellect.

It is up to us to develop what we have been given.

The true intellectual does not gloat in what she knows for no one has the capacity to know everything, and only the fool pretends otherwise.

Knowledge has no finish line.

Instead, as with life, it is merely a perpetual marathon full of potential and pitfalls.

Intellect is not to be celebrated; it should be constantly and humbly improved.

The more one learns, the more one understands that he or she actually knows very little.

Mastering one topic means very little in the sense that an infinite amount of new topics remain alive and waiting to be tackled.

There is no better way to travel the journey of life than with a book held greedily in hand.

Exercise 07

Much of the written evidence historians of ancient times must use is the equivalent of what our legal system calls “hearsay.”

It comes from writers who lived long after the events that they relate and often contains much local folklore and tradition that may or may not be accurate.

Furthermore, sometimes the level of “hearsay” between the “witness” and the original event is even greater.

The writings of some ancient authors survive only in quotations from their work by other ancient figures.

The history of Egypt written by Manetho an Egyptian priest of the early third century BCE, is known only through such quotations.

The same is true for the work of the Hellenistic Babylonian priest, Berossus.

Thus, not only were these authors writing long after the events they were describing, but we also have the added problem of trying to decide whether or not they were quoted correctly.

Obviously, the historian has to analyze such sources with great care and seek independent validation of their testimony from archaeology or other texts.

Exercise 08

Ordinary citizens are often keen to blame minority or culturally oppressed groups for their problems or failures.

Often this can be explained by ignorance or fear.

If we do not know or understand the culture of a minority or oppressed group, it is easy to see its behavior as unacceptable or ‘uncivilised’ and therefore not worthy of consideration or respect.

Only when we come to understand another culture’s ways can we start to realise that it is, like ours, only human and neither totally wrong nor totally right.

It should be a part of a journalist’s role to give readers the information they need to reach sensible decisions, not to play on their fears and prejudices.

If journalists tell people only what they expect to hear about minority or oppressed groups then the debate about their position in society is not advanced.

It is part of the journalist’s duty to help advance society’s awareness of such problems by providing people with a wider truth than their existing prejudices.