



ENQUIRY

Free Thought and Discourse

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Michel de Montaigne and Thoughts on his Essay *Of Experience*

By Claire Anastasia Kitz // Staff Writer

A French nobleman, Michel de Montaigne, shut himself up in his castle tower in 1571 and wrote a series of essays for his family and friends over the course of more than twenty years. One essay in particular, *Of Experience*, explores his thoughts and feelings on life with an uncommon intelligence, wit, bluntness, and masterful insight.

Montaigne's essays are of himself, and by himself. He is an accidental philosopher in the sense that his purpose in writing is private and without a clear end. Montaigne, in fact, calls himself such. His fundamental assertion in his collection of essays is to tell of his own being and way of life. He turns away from deliberate philosophy because he sees too much presumption in human thinking and instead seeks to re-understand concepts and ideas that he is already familiar with.

To read his essay *Of Experience* is like revisiting an old, well-loved friend. For those reading it again, it is like sitting in a comfortable chair and savoring a steaming cup of coffee or tea. His topics in *Of Experience* are mainly his health, the value of experience, how life is to be lived, fatherhood, the importance of family, food, and moving forward even if you have to crawl. "When I dance, I dance; when I sleep, I sleep; yes, and when I walk alone in the beautiful orchard, if

my thoughts have been welling on extraneous incidents for some part of the time, for some other part I bring them back to the walk, in the orchard, to the sweetness of this solitude, and to me." (p. 850) To read this section is a gift; it is to be content.

Even though this essay was written in the 16th century, Montaigne speaks to the modern world because of his honesty, common sense, and direct language. He does not hide his human frailty or his imperfections: "My mind is quick and firm; and I know not which of the two, my mind or my body I have had more difficulty in keeping in one place. I have never succeeded in keeping some part of me from always wandering..." (p. 848) He writes of his likes and dislikes, his health, his past illnesses—in other words, personal experiences. He is a philosopher and writer living in the real world, not just the world of the musings of the mind.

For Montaigne, living appropriately and finding contentment takes resolve. Even in the face of ill health, an unhappy marriage, and old age, happiness should be pursued and never postponed. Death awaits us all. Life's moments of joy are to be savored, in all the messiness and suffering of human existence. The pursuit of peace and serenity are much preferred to pondering life's miseries

Our Standards for Public Officials

By Allison Zuckerman // Staff Writer

Imagine this scenario: a wealthy and influential politician creates a philanthropic foundation that dedicates itself to global causes. While the public may have only a vague idea of the foundation's actual doings, its name is famous and it attracts substantial-sized donations from CEOs and celebrities. This politician eventually becomes Secretary of State, heads off to Washington D.C. and hands over the reins of the foundation

to his/her spouse, without ever severing formal ties to this organization. During this politician's tenure as Secretary of State, donors who gifted millions of dollars to the foundation may or may not have received special access to the politician's time.

Am I alluding to Hillary Clinton and the Clinton Foundation? Of course I am. I am also describing former Secretary of State Colin Powell and his charity, America's

Promise. Only one of these people, however, has come under intense media scrutiny for their ties to their charity and its donors.

Comparing the actions of Hillary Clinton and Colin Powell reveals a certain hypocrisy and double standard with regard to how the American public and the American media have treated Hillary Clinton and her time as Secretary of State. This in no way excuses or defends her actions concerning her private email server or her foreign policy. It is, of course, important to hold our public officials to a high standard of transparency

and honesty. Nevertheless, Hillary Clinton is the first person to be consistently raked across the coals for not consistently meeting those high standards.

The Wall Street Journal reported early this September that before giving a speech on September 16, 2011 on empowering women at a summit in San Francisco, she "met with nine executives from Wal-Mart Stores Inc., for which she once served on the board." In the spring of 2012, Wal-Mart promised millions of dollars in grants to 55,000 Latin American women

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Tweets of the Week



Allahpundit
@allahpundit

Those two-tone Jaguars helmets are atrocious



Kevin D. Williamson
@KevinNR

You know what word you don't want in every headline about you? "Collapse."



Dan McLaughlin
@baseballcrank

Jill Stein is a frighteningly bad presidential candidate *compared to Trump, Clinton and Johnson*.



Dan McLaughlin
@baseballcrank

Evan McMullin has the first half of a fine presidential resume.



Seth Mandel
@SethAMandel

We're minutes away from new NFL season. Or, as it's known to fellow Jets fans, two weeks until "there's always next year."

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through a “public-private partnership” Clinton had created at the State Department and donated \$55,000 to Vital Voices, a charity Clinton had co-founded. Later in the year Secretary Clinton visited India where she argued for the loosening of restrictions on superstore retailers.

The clear implication from the *Wall Street Journal* is that Wal-Mart Stores Inc. gained influence over Clinton and her foreign policy decisions after donating to her various charities.

Despite Clinton’s representative stating that she was arguing on behalf of all American companies in general, this may very well be

the case. The *WSJ* might take issue with the way Clinton handled her relationship with Wal-Mart, but no one cared when Colin Powell did the exact same thing when he was secretary. According to both Matthew Yglesias at Vox.com and the Non-Profit Quarterly, Ken Lay, chair of Enron, was a major donor to Powell’s America’s Promise. While Colin Powell was Secretary of State, the State Department helped defend Enron in a dispute between that company and the Indian government. Ken Lay was also a big donor to one of Barbara Bush’s charities while George W. Bush was in office.

Can it be proved that the chair of Enron was afforded time or in-

fluence with the State Department due to his connections with and donations to the Secretary of State and his charity? No. At that time, the media were not after Colin Powell like they currently are after Hillary Clinton. No one in the media investigated those connections.

The American public considers it almost common knowledge that Hillary Clinton is “corrupt.” This is mostly due to the way the media cover every piece of information about her, as when an ABC investigation “revealed” that a donor to the Clinton Foundation used his connections to get better seating at a State Department function. There is nothing wrong

with this level of scrutiny, but let it be applied to everyone else. No one began any investigations or witch-hunts when AT&T donated large sums to Powell’s foundation while Powell’s son was chair of the Federal Communications Commission, the governmental body that regulates AT&T.

Hillary Clinton is in no way less guilty of anything the press or the American public has accused her of. It is time, however, that the charges against her are also brought to the rest of our public officials. If giving time or policy influence to corporate donors is wrong, then it must be wrong for everyone.

On Safe Spaces

By Amy Elinski // Staff Writer

The University of Chicago has taken unusual action against political correctness, rejecting policies of safe spaces and trigger warnings utilized by so many colleges. The Dean of Students sent a letter to the newly-matriculated class of 2020, stating that the University did not support the use of “so-called trigger warnings” or “condone the creation of intellectual safe spaces.” In doing such, Dean John Ellison demonstrated his commitment to free speech and intellectual diversity, a commitment current university faculty rarely make.

Dean Ellison’s letter is without a doubt a risky move on the part of the administration. In recent years, the administration office has been taken over several times by student activists. Following a series of sit-ins, the University of Chicago has even had to hire a private police force to protect the administration. In sending this letter to the class of 2020, Dean Ellison made the administration vulnerable to further criticism.

The letter has been met with mixed reviews on campus.

Several student organizations released statements applauding the letter and the university’s continued commitment to free thought and expression.

Student activists condemned the letter, claiming that the administration is trying to protect white men from having their feelings hurt in discussion. Others claim that the administration hinders their ability to speak freely by prohibiting safe spaces.

But safe spaces only burden those who advocate for them; the liberal activists who are the primary proponents of safe spaces are blissfully unaware of the harm they cause themselves by remaining unchallenged. In his letter, Dean Ellison spoke of his commitment to ensuring that students will not be protected from views that differ from their own. “Fostering the free exchange of ideas reinforces a related University priority — building a campus that welcomes people of all backgrounds,” Ellison stated in his letter to the class of 2020. “Diversity of opinion and background is a fundamental strength of our community. The members of our community must have the freedom to espouse and explore a wide range of ideas.”

Demands to be coddled and protected from differing viewpoints prevent college students from strengthening and reaffirming their beliefs. Safe spaces do not provide room for growth; rather, they allow the mind to become stagnant. When a challenge to their beliefs does arise, proponents of safe spaces are completely unprepared.

In a world chock-full of so-called “microaggressions,” too many students have become simply unable to handle challenges. Their oversensitivity, and readiness to brand anyone who offends them as bigoted, has forced liberal professors to tread lightly in fear of triggering the hypersensitivity of their students. In June, a liberal professor published an article on Vox.com titled, “I’m a Liberal Professor, and My Liberal Students

Terrify Me,” using a pseudonym out of fear of backlash.

The fact that Dean Ellison of the University of Chicago dared to address the phenomenon of political correctness on college campuses, and to go so far as to reject some of its tenets, is commendable. Dean Ellison demonstrated

that the campus culture may be shifting away from the extreme political correctness that has dominated recently. By ensuring the protection to intellectual freedom and diversity on campus, the University of Chicago shows that free thought and expression still live in academia.

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