

ADVANCED READING

PASSAGE 1

Many argue that recent developments in electronic technology such as computers and videotape have enabled artists to vary their forms of expression. For example, video art can now achieve images whose effect is produced by “digitalization”: breaking up the picture using computerized information processing. Such new technologies create new ways of seeing and hearing by adding different dimensions to older forms, rather than replacing those forms. Consider *Locale*, a film about a modern dance company. The camera operator wore a Steadicam™, an uncomplicated device that allows a camera to be mounted on a person so that the camera remains steady no matter how the operator moves. The Steadicam™ captures the dance in ways impossible with traditional mounts. Such new equipment also allows for the preservation of previously unrecordable aspects of performances, thus enriching archives. By contrast, others claim that technology subverts the artistic enterprise: that artistic efforts achieved with machines preempt human creativity, rather than being inspired by it. The originality of musical performance, for example, might suffer, as musicians would be deprived of the opportunity to spontaneously change pieces of music before live audiences. Some even worry that technology will eliminate live performance altogether; performances will be recorded for home viewing, abolishing the relationship between performer and audience. But these negative views assume both that technology poses an unprecedented challenge to the arts and that we are not committed enough to the artistic enterprise to preserve the live performance, assumptions that seem unnecessarily cynical. In fact, technology has traditionally assisted our capacity for creative expression and can refine our notions of any give art form. For example, the portable camera and the snapshot were developed at the same time as the rise of impressionist painting in the nineteenth century. These photographic technologies encouraged a new appreciation. In addition, impressionist artists like Degas studied the elements of light and movement captured by instantaneous photography and used their new understanding of the way our perceptions distort reality to try to more accurately capture reality in their work. Since photos can capture the “moments” of a movement, such as a hand partially raised in a gesture of greeting, Impressionist artists were inspired to paint such moments in order to more effectively convey the quality of spontaneous human action. Photography freed artists from the preconception that a subject should be painted in a static, artificial entirety, and inspired them to capture the random and fragmentary qualities of our world. Finally, since photography preempted painting as the means of obtaining portraits, painters had more freedom to vary their subject matter, thus giving rise to the abstract creations characteristic of modern art.

PASSAGE 2

During the 1940s and 1950s the United States government developed a new policy toward Native Americans, often known as “readjustment.” Because the increased awareness of civil rights in these decades helped reinforce the belief that life on reservations prevented Native Americans from exercising the rights guaranteed to citizens under the United States Constitution, the readjustment movement advocated the end of the federal government’s involvement in Native American affairs and encouraged the assimilation of Native Americans as individuals into mainstream society. However, the same years also saw the emergence of a Native American leadership and efforts to develop tribal instructions and reaffirm tribal identity. The clash of these two trends may be traced in the attempts on the part of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to convince the Oneida tribe of Wisconsin to accept readjustment. The culmination of BIA efforts to sway the Oneida occurred at a meeting that took place in the fall of 1956. The BIA suggested that it would be to the Oneida’s benefit to own their own property and, like other homeowners, pay real estate taxes on it. The BIA also emphasized that, after readjustment, the government would not attempt to restrict Native Americans’ ability to sell their individually owned lands. The Oneida were then offered a one-time lump-sum payment of \$60,000 in lieu of the \$0.52 annuity guaranteed in perpetuity to each member of the tribe under the Canandaigua Treaty. The efforts of the BIA to “sell” readjustment to the tribe failed because the Oneida realized that they had heard similar offers before. The Oneida delegates reacted negatively to the BIA’s first suggestion because taxation of Native American lands had been one past vehicle for dispossessing the Oneida: after the distribution of some tribal lands to individual Native Americans in the late nineteenth century, Native American lands became subject to taxation, resulting in new and impossible financial burdens, foreclosures, and subsequent tax sales of property. The Oneida delegates were equally suspicious of the BIA’s emphasis on the rights of individual landowners, since in the late nineteenth century many individual Native Americans had been convinced by unscrupulous speculators to sell their lands. Finally, the offer of a lump-sum payment was unanimously opposed by the Oneida delegates, who saw that changing the terms of a treaty might jeopardize the many pending land claims based upon the treaty. As a result of the 1956 meeting, the Oneida rejected readjustment. Instead, they determined to improve tribal life by lobbying for federal monies for postsecondary education, for the improvement of drainage on tribal lands, and for the building of a convalescent home for tribal members. Thus, by learning the lessons of history, the Oneida were able to survive as a tribe in their homeland.

PASSAGE 3

Direct observation of contemporary societies at the threshold of widespread literacy has not assisted our understanding of how such literacy altered ancient Greek society, in particular its political culture. The discovery of what Goody has called the “enabling effects” of literacy in contemporary societies tends to seduce the observer into confusing often rudimentary knowledge of how to read with popular access to important books and documents: this confusion is then projected onto ancient societies. “In ancient Greece,” Goody writes, “alphabetic reading and writing was important for the development of political democracy.” An examination of the ancient Greek city Athens exemplifies how this sort of confusion is detrimental to understanding ancient politics. In Athens, the early development of a written law code was retrospectively mythologized as the critical factor in breaking the power monopoly of the old aristocracy: hence the Greek tradition of the “law-giver,” which has captured the imaginations of scholars like Goody. But the application and efficacy of all law codes depend on their interpretation by magistrates and courts, and unless the right of interpretation is “democratized,” the mere existence of written laws changes little. In fact, never in antiquity did any but the elite consult documents and books. Even in Greek courts, the juries heard only the relevant statutes read out during the proceedings, as they heard verbal testimony, and they then rendered their verdict on the spot, without the benefit of any discussion among themselves. True, in Athens the juries were representative of a broad spectrum of the population, and these juries, drawn from diverse social classes, both interpreted what they had heard and determined matters of fact. However, they guided solely by the speeches prepared for the parties by professional pleaders and by the quotations of laws or decrees within the speeches, rather than by their own access to any kind of document or book. Granted, people today also rely heavily on a truly knowledgeable minority for information and its interpretation, often transmitted orally. Yet this is still fundamentally different from an ancient society in which there was no “popular literature,” i.e., no newspapers, magazines, or other media that dealt with sociopolitical issues. An ancient law code would have been analogous to the Latin Bible, a venerated document but a closed book. The resistance of the medieval Church to vernacular translations of the Bible, in the West at least, is, therefore, a pointer to the realities of ancient literacy. When fundamental documents are accessible for study only to an elite, the rest of the society is subject to the elite’s interpretation of the rules of behaviour, including right political behaviour. Athens, insofar as it functioned as a democracy, did so not because of widespread literacy, but because the elite had chosen to accept democratic institutions.

PASSAGE 4

The English who in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries inhabited those colonies that would later become the United States shared a common political vocabulary with the English in England. Steeped as they were in the English political language, these colonials failed to observe that their experience in America had given the words a significance quite different from that accepted by the English with whom they debated; in fact, they claimed that they were more loyal to the English political tradition than were the English in England. In many respects, the political institutions of England were reproduced in these American colonies. By the middle of the eighteenth century, all of these colonies except four were headed by Royal Governors appointed by the King and perceived as bearing a relation to the people of the colony similar to that of the King to the English people. Moreover, each of these colonies enjoyed a representative assembly, which was consciously modelled, in powers and practices, after the English Parliament. In both England and these colonies, only property holders could vote. Nevertheless, though English and colonial institutions were structurally similar, attitudes toward those institutions differed. For example, English legal development from the early seventeenth century had been moving steadily toward the absolute power of Parliament. The most unmistakable sign of this tendency was the legal assertion that the King was subject to the law. Together with this resolute denial of the absolute right of kings went the assertion that Parliament was unlimited in its power: it could change even the Constitution by its ordinary acts of legislation. By the eighteenth century, the English had accepted the idea that the parliamentary representatives of the people were omnipotent. The citizens of these colonies did not look upon the English Parliament with such fond eyes, nor did they concede that their own assemblies possessed such wide powers. There were good historical reasons for this. To the English the word "constitution" meant the whole body of law and legal custom formulated since the beginning of the kingdom, whereas to these colonials a constitution was a specific written document, enumerating specific powers. This distinction in meaning can be traced to the fact that the foundations of government in the various colonies were written charters granted by the Crown. These express authorizations to govern were tangible, definite things. Over the years these colonials had often repaired to the charters to justify themselves in the struggle against tyrannical governors or officials of the Crown. More than a century of government underwritten constitutions convinced these colonists of the necessity for and efficacy of protecting their liberties against governmental encroachment by explicitly defining all governmental powers in a document.