Enclosed you will find some selections from Plato’s *Republic* as well as an essay on human nature. Please read them, mark them up as necessary, try to digest them as best you can, and be prepared to discuss them during our first classroom experiences.

You will also find a simple personality test. Please take that test and bring it with you.
Please take this quiz and bring it to class with you on August 28.

**Quiet Quiz: Are You an Introvert or an Extrovert?**

Excerpted from *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* by Susan Cain

To find out where you fall on the introvert-extrovert spectrum, answer each question True or False, choosing the one that applies to you more often than not.

1. _____ I prefer one-on-one conversations to group activities.

2. _____ I often prefer to express myself in writing.

3. _____ I enjoy solitude.

4. _____ I seem to care about wealth, fame, and status less than my peers.

5. _____ I dislike small talk, but I enjoy talking in depth about topics that matter to me.

6. _____ People tell me that I'm a good listener.

7. _____ I'm not a big risk-taker.

8. _____ I enjoy work that allows me to "dive in" with few interruptions.

9. _____ I like to celebrate birthdays on a small scale, with only one or two close friends or family members.

10. _____ People describe me as "soft-spoken" or "mellow."
11. ______ I prefer not to show or discuss my work with others until it's finished.

12. ______ I dislike conflict.

13. ______ I do my best work on my own.

14. ______ I tend to think before I speak.

15. ______ I feel drained after being out and about, even if I've enjoyed myself.

16. ______ I often let calls go through to voice mail.

17. ______ If you had to choose, I'd prefer a weekend with absolutely nothing to do to one with too many things scheduled.

18. ______ I don't enjoy multitasking.

19. ______ I can concentrate easily

20. ______ In classroom situations, I prefer lectures to seminars.

**Total True:** ______

**Total False:** ______

This is an informal quiz, not a scientifically validated personality test. The questions were formulated based on characteristics of introversion often accepted by contemporary researchers.
The model of human nature one embraces will guide and shape everything else, from the economic system one prefers to the political system one supports.

At the core of every social, political, and economic system is a picture of human nature (to paraphrase 20th-century columnist Walter Lippmann). The suppositions we begin with—the ways in which that picture is developed—determine the lives we lead, the institutions we build, and the civilizations we create. They are the foundation stone.

Three Views of Human Nature

During the 18th century—a period that saw the advent of modern capitalism—there were several different currents of thought about the nature of the human person. Three models were particularly significant.

One model was that humans, while flawed, are perfectible. A second was that we are flawed, and fatally so; we need to accept and build our society around this unpleasant reality. A third view was that although human beings are flawed, we are capable of virtuous acts and self-government—that under the right circumstances, human nature can work to the advantage of the whole.

The first school included those who (representing the French Enlightenment) believed in man’s perfectibility and the pre-eminence of scientific rationalism. Their plans were grandiose, utopian, and revolutionary, aiming at “the universal regeneration of mankind” and the creation of a “New Man.”

Advocates of free enterprise believe that creativity, enterprise, and ingenuity compose essential parts of human nature.

Such notions, espoused by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and other Enlightenment philosophers, heavily influenced a later generation of socialist thinkers. These theorists—Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, and Henri de Saint-Simon among them—believed that human nature can be as easily reshaped as hot wax. They considered human nature plastic and malleable, to the point that no fixed human nature existed to speak of; architects of a social system could, therefore, mold it into anything they imagined.

These theorists dreamed of a communal society, liberated from private property and free of human inequality. They articulated a theory of human nature and socioeconomic organization that eventually influenced capitalism’s most famous and bitter critic: the German philosopher, economist, and revolutionary Karl Marx.
The second current of thought, embodied in the writings of 17th-century Englishmen Thomas Hobbes and Bernard Mandeville, viewed human nature as more nearly the opposite: inelastic, brittle, and unalterable. And people were, at their core, antisocial beings. Hobbes, for example, worried that people were ever in danger of lapsing into a pre-civilized state, “without a common power to keep them all in awe,” which, in turn, would lead to a hopeless existence, a “state of nature” characterized by “a war of every man, against every man.” It was, Hobbes wrote, a life “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” To avoid this fate, one must submit to the authority of the state, what he termed the “Leviathan” (a monstrous, multi-headed sea creature mentioned in the Hebrew Bible). In the process, we would gain self-preservation, but at the expense of liberty.²

The third model of human nature is found in the thinking of the American founders. “If men were angels,” wrote James Madison, the father of the Constitution, in Federalist Paper No. 51, “no government would be necessary.” But Madison and the other founders knew men were not angels and would never become angels. They believed instead that human nature was mixed, a combination of virtue and vice, nobility and corruption. People were swayed by both reason and passion, capable of self-government but not to be trusted with absolute power. The founders’ assumption was that within every human heart, let alone among different individuals, are competing and sometimes contradictory moral impulses and currents.

A free market can also better our moral condition—not dramatically and not always, but often enough. It places a premium on thrift, savings, and investment.

This last view of human nature is consistent with and reflective of Christian teaching. The Scriptures teach that we are both made in the image of God and fallen creatures; in the words of Saint Paul, we can be “instruments of wickedness” as well as “instruments of righteousness.”³ Human beings are capable of acts of squalor and acts of nobility; we can pursue vice and we can pursue virtue.

As for the matter of the state: Romans 13 makes clear that government is divinely sanctioned by God to preserve public order, restrain evil, and make justice possible. This, too, was a view shared by many of the founders. Government reflects human nature, they argued, “because the passions of men will not conform to the dictates of reason and justice without constraint.”⁴

The Anglo-Scottish Enlightenment philosophies of Adam Smith, David Hume, and Francis Hutcheson both informed and aligned with the views of the American founders and Christian teaching. Smith was himself a professor of moral philosophy; The Theory of Moral Sentiments⁵ preceded The Wealth of Nations.⁶ Smith and his compatriots did not believe in the perfectibility of human nature and thought it foolish to build any human institution on the possibility of attaining such perfection. Neither did they believe that human nature was irredeemably corrupt and devoid of virtue.
Self Interest: A Positive or Negative Human Characteristic?

The American founders believed, and capitalism rests on the belief, that people are driven by “self-interest” and the desire to better our condition. Self-interest is not necessarily bad; in fact, Smith believed, and capitalism presupposes, that the general welfare depends on allowing an individual to pursue his self-interest “as long as he does not violate the laws of justice.” When a person acts in his own interest, “he frequently promotes [the interest] of society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it.”

Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecœur, among the first writers who attempted to explain the American frontier and the concept of the “American Dream” to a European audience, captured this view when he wrote:

The American ought therefore to love this country much better than that wherein either he or his forefathers were born. Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labour; his labour is founded on the basis of nature, self-interest; can it want a stronger allurement?

Smith took for granted that people are driven by self-interest, by the desire to better their condition. “It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner,” is how he put it, “but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves not to their humanity, but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages.”

Harnessing and channelled the right way, then, self-interest—when placed within certain rules and boundaries—can be good, leading to a more prosperous and humane society.

Morality and capitalism, like morality and democracy, are intimately connected and mutually complementary.

Here it is important to distinguish between self-interest and selfishness. Self-interest—unlike selfishness—will often lead one to commit acts of altruism; rightly understood, it knows that no man is an island, that we are part of a larger community, and that what is good for others is good for us. To put it another way: Pursuing our own good can advance the common good. Even more, advancing the common good can advance our own good.

Advocates of free enterprise believe that creativity, enterprise, and ingenuity are essential parts of human nature. Capitalism aims to take advantage of the self-interest of human nature, knowing that the collateral effects will be a more decent and benevolent society. Capitalists believe that liberty is an inherent good and should form the cornerstone not only of our political institutions but our economic ones as well. Free-market advocates also insist that wealth and prosperity can mitigate envy and resentment, which have acidic effects on human relations. Markets, precisely because they generate wealth, also end up distributing wealth.
The Relationship between Human Nature and Government

Why does all of this matter? Because our “picture of human nature” determines, in large measure, the institutions we design. For example, the architects of our government carefully studied history and every conceivable political arrangement that had been devised up to their time. In the course of their analysis, they made fundamental judgments about human nature and designed a constitutional form of government with it in mind.

What is true for creating political institutions is also true for economic ones. They, too, proceed from understanding human behavior.

Harnessed and channeled the right way, self-interest—when placed within certain rules and boundaries—can be good, leading to a more prosperous and humane society.

It is hard to overstate the importance of this matter. The model of human nature one embraces will guide and shape everything else, from the economic system one embraces (free-market capitalism versus socialism) to the political system one supports (democracy versus the “dictatorship of the proletariat”). Like a ship about to begin a long voyage, a navigational mistake at the outset can lead a crew to go badly astray, shipwreck, and run aground. To use another metaphor, this time from the world of medicine: A physician cannot treat an illness before diagnosing it correctly; diagnosing incorrectly can make things far worse than they might otherwise be.

Those who champion capitalism embrace a truth we see played out in almost every life on almost any given day: If you link reward to effort, you will get more effort. If you create incentives for a particular kind of behavior, you will see more of that behavior.

A free market can also better our moral condition—not dramatically and not always, but often enough. It places a premium on thrift, savings, and investment. And capitalism, when functioning properly, penalizes certain kinds of behavior—bribery, corruption, and lawlessness among them—because citizens in a free-market society have a huge stake in discouraging such behavior, which is a poison-tipped dagger aimed straight at the heart of prosperity.

The founders predicated that within every human heart, let alone among different individuals, strive competing and sometimes contradictory moral impulses and currents.

In addition, capitalism can act as a civilizing agent. The social critic Irving Kristol argued, correctly in our view, that the early architects of democratic capitalism believed commercial transactions “would themselves constantly refine and enlarge the individual’s sense of his own self-interest, so that in the end the kind of commercial society that was envisaged would be a relatively decent community.”

But capitalism, like American democracy itself, is hardly perfect or sufficient by itself. It has a troubling history, as well as a glorious one. And, like America, it is an ongoing, never-ending experiment, neither self-sustaining nor self-executing. Capitalism requires strong, vital, non-economic and non-political institutions—including the family, churches and other places of
worship, civic associations, and schools—to complement it. Such institutions are necessary to allow capitalism to advance human progress.

A capitalist society needs to produce an educated citizenry. It needs to be buttressed by people who possess and who teach others virtues such as sympathy, altruism, compassion, self-discipline, perseverance, and honesty. And it needs a polity that will abide by laws, contracts, and election results (regardless of their outcome). Without these virtues, venality can eat capitalism from within and use it for pernicious ends.

We need to understand that capitalism, like democracy, is part of an intricate social web. Capitalism both depends on this web and contributes mightily to it. Morality and capitalism, like morality and democracy, are intimately connected and mutually complementary. They reinforce one another; they need one another; and they are terribly diminished without one another. They are links in a golden chain.

Notes


7. Ibid., book IV, ch. II.


12. “As there is a degree of depravity in mankind which requires a certain degree of circumspection and distrust,” Madison wrote in Federalist No. 55, “so there are other qualities in human nature, which justify a certain portion of esteem and confidence. Republican government presupposes the existence of these qualities in a higher degree than any other form.”
"Yes," he said.

"Then the city must be made bigger again. This healthy one isn’t adequate any more, but must already be gorged with a bulky mass of things, which are not in cities because of necessity—all the hunters and imitators, many concerned with figures and colors, many with music; and poets and their helpers, rhapsodes, actors, choral dancers, contractors, and craftsmen of all sorts of equipment, for feminine adornment as well as other things. And so we’ll need more servants too. Or doesn’t it seem there will be need of teachers, wet nurses, governesses, beauticians, barbers, and, further, relish-makers and cooks? And, what’s more, we’re in addition going to need swineherds. This animal wasn’t in our earlier city—there was no need—but in this one there will be need of it in addition. And there’ll also be need of very many other fatted beasts if someone will eat them, won’t there?"

"Of course."

"Won’t we be in much greater need of doctors if we follow this way of life rather than the earlier one?"

"Much greater."

"And the land, of course, which was then sufficient for feeding the men who were then, will now be small although it was sufficient. Or how should we say it?"

"Like that," he said.

"Then must we cut off a piece of our neighbors’ land, if we are going to have sufficient for pasture and tillage, and they in turn from ours, if they let themselves go to the unlimited acquisition of money, overstepping the boundary of the necessary?"

"Quite necessarily, Socrates," he said.

"After that won’t we go to war as a consequence, Glaucon? Or how will it be?"

"Like that," he said.

"And let’s not yet say whether war works evil or good," I said, "but only this much, that we have in its turn found the origin of war—in those things whose presence in cities most of all produces evils both private and public."

"Most certainly."

"Now, my friend, the city must be still bigger, and not by a small number but by a whole army, which will go out and do battle with in-"
vaders for all the wealth and all the things we were just now talking about."

"What," he said, "aren't they adequate by themselves?"

"Not if that was a fine agreement you and all we others made when we were fashioning the city," I said. "Surely we were in agreement, if you remember, that it's impossible for one man to do a fine job in many arts."

"What you say is true," he said.

"Well then," I said, "doesn't the struggle for victory in war seem to be a matter for art?"

"Very much so," he said.

"Should one really care for the art of shoemaking more than for the art of war?"

"Not at all."

"But, after all, we prevented the shoemaker from trying at the same time to be a farmer or a weaver or a housebuilder; he had to stay a shoemaker just so the shoemaker's art would produce fine work for us. And in the same way, to each one of the others we assigned one thing, the one for which his nature fitted him, at which he was to work throughout his life, exempt from the other tasks, not letting the crucial moments pass, and thus doing a fine job. Isn't it of the greatest importance that what has to do with war be well done? Or is it so easy that a farmer or a shoemaker or a man practicing any other art whatsoever can be at the same time skilled in the art of war, while no one could become an adequate draughts or dice player who didn't practice it from childhood on, but only gave it his spare time? Will a man, if he picks up a shield or any other weapon or tool of war, on that very day be an adequate combatant in a battle of heavy-armed soldiers, or any other kind of battle in war, even though no other tool if picked up will make anyone a craftsman or contestant, nor will it even be of use to the man who has not gained knowledge of it or undergone adequate training?"

"In that case," he said, "the tools would be worth a lot."

"Then," I said, "to the extent that the work of the guardians is more important, it would require more leisure time than the other tasks as well as greater art and diligence."

"I certainly think so," he said.

"And also a nature fit for the pursuit?"

"Of course."

"Then it's our job, as it seems, to choose, if we're able, which are the natures, and what kind they are, fit for guarding the city."

"Indeed it is our job."

"By Zeus," I said, "it's no mean thing we've taken upon our-
selves. But nevertheless, we mustn't be cowardly, at least as far as it's in our power."

"No," he said, "we mustn't."

"Do you suppose," I said, "that for guarding there is any difference between the nature of a noble puppy and that of a well-born young man?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, surely both of them need sharp senses, speed to catch what they perceive, and, finally, strength if they have to fight it out with what they have caught."

"Yes, indeed," he said, "both need all these things."

"To say nothing of courage, if they are to fight well."

"Of course."

"Then, will horse or dog—or any other animal whatsoever—be willing to be courageous if it's not spirited? Haven't you noticed how irresistible and unbeatable spirit is, so that its presence makes every soul fearless and invincible in the face of everything?"

"Yes, I have noticed it."

"As for the body's characteristics, it's plain how the guardian must be."

"Yes."

"And as for the soul's—that he must be spirited."

"That too."

"Glauc, how will they not be savage to one another and the rest of the citizens?"

"By Zeus," he said, "it won't be easy."

"Yet, they must be gentle to their own and cruel to enemies. If not, they'll not wait for others to destroy them, but they'll do it themselves beforehand."

"True," he said."

"What will we do?" I said. "Where will we find a disposition at the same time gentle and great-spirited? Surely a gentle nature is opposed to a spirited one."

"It looks like it."

"Yet, if a man lacks either of them, he can't become a good guardian. But these conditions resemble impossibilities, and so it follows that a good guardian is impossible."

"I'm afraid so," he said.

I too was at a loss, and, looking back over what had gone before, I said, "It is just, my friend, that we're at a loss. For we've abandoned the image we proposed."

"How do you mean?"

"We didn't notice that there are, after all, natures such as we
thought impossible, possessing these opposites.”

“Where, then?”

“One could see it in other animals too, especially, however, in the one we compared to the guardian. You know, of course, that by nature the disposition of noble dogs is to be as gentle as can be with their familiars and people they know and the opposite with those they don’t know.”

“I do know that.”

“Then,” I said, “it is possible, after all; and what we’re seeking for in the guardian isn’t against nature.”

“It doesn’t seem so.”

“In your opinion, then, does the man who will be a fit guardian need, in addition to spiritedness, also to be a philosopher in his nature?”

“How’s that?” he said. “I don’t understand.”

“This, too, you’ll observe in dogs,” I said, “and it’s a thing in the beast worthy of our wonder.”

“What?”

“When it sees someone it doesn’t know, it’s angry, although it never had any bad experience with him. And when it sees someone it knows, it greets him warmly, even if it never had a good experience with him. Didn’t you ever wonder about this before?”

“No, I haven’t paid very much attention to it up to now. But it’s plain that it really does this.”

“Well, this does look like an attractive affection of its nature and truly philosophic.”

“In what way?”

“In that it distinguishes friendly from hostile looks by nothing other than by having learned the one and being ignorant of the other,” I said. “And so, how can it be anything other than a lover of learning since it defines what’s its own and what’s alien by knowledge and ignorance?”

“It surely couldn’t be anything but,” he said.

“Well,” I said, “but aren’t love of learning and love of wisdom the same?”

“Yes, the same,” he said.

“So shall we be bold and assert that a human being too, if he is going to be gentle to his own and those known to him, must by nature be a philosopher and a lover of learning?”

“Yes,” he said, “let’s assert it.”

“Then the man who’s going to be a fine and good guardian of the city for us will in his nature be philosophic, spirited, swift, and strong.”
"That's entirely certain," he said.

"Then he would be of this sort to begin with. But how, exactly, will they be reared and educated by us? And does our considering this contribute anything to our goal of discerning that for the sake of which we are considering all these things—in what way justice and injustice come into being in a city? We don't want to scant the argument, but we don't want an overlong one either."

And Glaucon's brother said, "I most certainly expect that this present consideration will contribute to that goal."

"By Zeus," I said, "then, my dear Adeimantus, it mustn't be given up even if it turns out to be quite long."

"No, it mustn't."

"Come, then, like men telling tales in a tale and at their leisure, let's educate the men in speech."

"We must."

"What is the education? Isn't it difficult to find a better one than that discovered over a great expanse of time? It is, of course, gymnastic for bodies and music for the soul."

"Yes, it is."

"Won't we begin educating in music before gymnastic?"

"Of course."

"You include speeches in music, don't you?" I said.

"I do."

"Do speeches have a double form, the one true, the other false?"

"Yes."

"Must they be educated in both, but first in the false?"

"I don't understand how you mean that," he said.

"Don't you understand," I said, "that first we tell tales to children? And surely they are, as a whole, false, though there are true things in them too. We make use of tales with children before exercises."

"That's so."

"That's what I meant by saying music must be taken up before gymnastic."

"That's right," he said.

"Don't you know that the beginning is the most important part of every work and that this is especially so with anything young and tender? For at that stage it's most plastic, and each thing assimilates itself to the model whose stamp anyone wishes to give to it."

"Quite so."
"Censorship, Culture, Education"

A Selection from
Plato's Republic
Translated by: Alan Bloom

Book III  401b-d

"Must we, then, supervise only the poets and compel them to impress the image of the good disposition on their poems or not to make them among us? Or must we also supervise the other craftsmen and prevent them from impressing this bad disposition, a licentious, illiberal, and graceless one, either on images of animals or on houses or on anything else that their craft produces? And the incapable craftsman we mustn't permit to practice his craft among us, so that our guardians won't be reared on images of vice, as it were on bad grass, every day cropping and grazing on a great deal little by little from many places, and unawares put together some one big bad thing in their soul? Mustn't we, rather, look for those craftsmen whose good natural endowments make them able to track down the nature of what is fine and graceful, so that the young, dwelling as it were in a healthy place, will be benefited by everything; and from that place something of the fine works will strike their vision or their hearing, like a breeze bringing health from good places; and beginning in childhood, it will, without their awareness, with the fair speech lead them to likeness and friendship as well as accord?"
"The Ring of Gyges"

A Selection from
Plato's Republic
Translated by: Alan Bloom

Book II - 359c-360e

"That even those who practice it do so unwillingly, from an incapacity to do injustice, we would best perceive if we should in thought do something like this: give each, the just man and the unjust, license to do whatever he wants, while we follow and watch where his desire will lead each. We would catch the just man red-handed going the same way as the unjust man out of a desire to get the better; this is what any nature naturally pursues as good, while it is law which by force perverts it to honor equality. The license of which I speak would best be realized if they should come into possession of the sort of power that it is said the ancestor of Gyges, the Lydian, once got. They say he was a shepherd toiling in the service of the man who was then ruling Lydia. There came to pass a great thunderstorm and an earthquake; the earth cracked and a chasm opened at the place where he was pasturing. He saw it, wondered at it, and went down. He saw, along with other quite wonderful things about which they tell tales, a hollow bronze horse. It had windows; peeping in, he saw there was a corpse inside that looked larger than human size. It had nothing on except a gold ring on its hand; he slipped it off and went out. When there was the usual gathering of the shepherds to make the monthly report to the king about the flocks, he too came, wearing the ring. Now, while he was sitting with the others, he chanced to turn the collet of the ring to himself, toward the inside of his hand; when he did this, he became invisible to those sitting by him, and they discussed him as though he were away. He wondered at this, and, fingering the ring again, he twisted the collet toward the outside; when he had twisted it, he became visible. Thinking this over, he tested whether the ring had this power, and that this exactly his result: when he turned the collet inward, he became invisible, when outward, visible. Aware of this, he immediately contrived to be one of the messengers to the king. When he arrived, he committed adultery with the king's wife and, along with her, set upon the king and killed him. And so he took over the rule.

"Now if there were two such rings, and the just man would put one on, and the unjust man the other, no one, as it would seem, would be so adamant as to stick by justice and bring himself to keep away from what belongs to others and not lay hold of it, although he had license to take what he wanted from the market without fear, and to go into houses and have intercourse with whomever he wanted, and to slay or release from bonds whomever he wanted, and to do other things as an equal to a god among humans. And in so doing, one would act no differently from the other, but both would go the same way. And yet, someone could say that this is a great proof that no one is willingly just but only when compelled to be so. Men do not take it to be a good for them in private, since wherever each supposes he can do injustice, he does it. Indeed, all men suppose injustice is far more to their private profit than justice. And what they suppose is true, as the man who makes this kind of an argument will say, since if a man were to get hold of such license and were never willing to do any injustice and didn't lay his hands on what belongs to others, he would seem most wretched to those who were aware of it, and most
foolish too, although they would praise him to each other’s' faces, deceiving each other for fear of suffering injustice. So much for that.

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**Book II - 362c-363a**

When Glaucon had said this, I had it in mind to say something to it, but his brother Adeimantus said in his turn, "You surely don't believe, Socrates, that the argument has been adequately stated?"

"Why not?" I said.

"What most needed to be said has not been said," he said.

"Then," I said, "as the saying goes, 'let a man stand by his brother.' So, you too, if he leaves out anything, come to his defense. And yet, what he said was already enough to bring me to my knees and make it impossible to help out justice."

And he said, "Nonsense. But still hear this too. We must also go through the arguments opposed to those of which he spoke, those that praise justice and blame injustice, so that what Glaucon in my opinion wants will be clearer. No doubt, fathers say to their sons and exhort them, as do all those who have care of anyone, that one must be just, that come from it; they exhort their charges to be just so that, as a result of the opinion, ruling offices and marriages will come to the one who seems to be just and all the other things that Glaucon a moment ago attributed to the just man as a result of his having a good reputation."
In the following pages you will find selections from Plato’s *Republic* dealing with Plato’s famous Allegory of the Cave. Familiarize yourself with this story and be prepared to talk about some of the implications for your life, education, Army experience, leadership, and the culture of those you need to work with both in American and in other cultures.

Also from Plato’s *Republic*, the second selection raises profound questions and concerns for democracy and democratization. Does Plato’s description of democracy look anything like what you see around you in America or in the democratic nations in which you have served? How does he predict democracy will dissolve (pp. 240-249) and do you find any useful lessons here for democratization efforts and prospects for democracy in the 21st century?