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9.68 Affect: Biological, Psychological, and Social Aspects of "Feelings"
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MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences
9.68/09 -Affect: ...
Field trip to the MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON
Wednesday February 18, 2009
GUIDE
S. L. Chorover

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

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		Enter the Roman Gallery next door. See:	
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30	(13)	<u>Part Two</u> : Exploring some other ancient traditions.	(7:45-8:00 pm)
30	(13a-13f)	Traditions that follow In the footsteps of the buddha:	
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33	13g	islamic (1st floor west of Indian gallery)	_____
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<u>PAGE</u>	<u>ITEM#</u>	<u>OBJECT OR TOPIC</u>	<u>TIMES AND NOTES</u>
34		Part Three: Western Traditions	(8:00pm—9:00pm)
34		A. European 15th to 19th C	(8:00pm--8:30pm)
34		Enter Koch Gallery Early north of rotunda	
35	(14)	Francesco del Cairo – Herodias with head of John the Baptist proceed north through the gallery and bear left around stairway; turn left into Medieval gallery. See:	
35	(15)	Donatello – Madonna of the clouds Exit from Medieval gallery. Proceed eastward via the central corridor, to the gallery at the end containing 17 th C Dutch and Flemish work. See:	
36	(16)	Rembrandt van Rijn, “The artist in his studio	
36	(17)	Giambologna – Rape of the Sabine woman Exit from 17 th C Dutch and Flemish gallery and immediately turn right. Pass through the first of two 18thC European galleries. Enter the second and see	
37	(18)	Tiepolo, Time unveiling truth	
37	(19)	Pannini - Gallery with paintings of Rome Continue westward, passing through European silver gallery in center of Evans Wing Enter the first of two 19thC European (preimpressionism) galleries. See:	
38	(20)	Reginault, Automedon and the horses of Achilles	
38	(21)	Manet, The execution of Maximilian Continue westward and enter the second 19thC European gallery. See	
39	(22)	Gerome, L’ eminence grise Exit the 19thC European gallery and turn left. On the wall on your left, see:	
40	(23)	Leighton, Painter’s honeymoon Turn back and approach the 19 th -20 th C impressionism gallery. Just before entering, see, on right hand (north) wall	
40	(24)	Couture, A widow. Enter the 19 th -20 th C Impressionism gallery, see esp.	
40	(25)	Gauguin –D’ou venon nous?	
41	(26)	Renior – Danse a Bougaville	
		B. A very brief glimpse of American art.	(8:30—9:00 pm)
		Descend to First Floor via Evans Wing central stairway; turn left and enter the Lee gallery (18thC Colonial American and early federal periods: See	
42	(27)	Copley, Watson and the Shark. Cross the central corridor and enter late 19thC. American gallery opposite See:	
44	(28)	Sargent, Daughters of Edward D. Boit, Return to Scharf Visitor’s Center and decide whether to visit 29a or 29b. Both are on the first floor Exit Visitor’s Center and proceed across Lower Rotunda	
45	(29a)	Is located in the Herb Ritts and Brown galleries through the door on your right. It is a photographic exhibit entitled “Photographic Figures”	
45	(29b)	Is located in the Torf gallery toward the Huntington Entrance It is entitled: Splendor and Elegance: European decorative arts and drawings from the Horace Wood Brock collection. Finally, proceed to the West Wing lobby and turn right. At the end of the Lower Galleria, see:	
46	(30)	Josiah McElkeny, Endlessly repeating 20 th century modernism	
		This ends PHASE ONE the time should be approximately Find a place to sit and take a few minutes to collect your thoughts before embarking on	(9:00 pm)
47-48		<u>PHASE TWO:</u> (see instructions in guide)	(9:00-9:45 pm)
		When you complete <u>PHASE TWO</u> , rendezvous at Visitor’s Center and proceed to Bus.	(9:50 pm)
49-50		<u>Reaction form to be completed and returned with photos to instructors via email.</u>	

INTRODUCTION

Background/Preparation

This is an academic exercise. Please approach it accordingly. Begin at the beginning and work through it, step-by-step to the end. Follow the instructions as conscientiously as possible. Pay attention to our suggestions about route-finding, etc.

Set performance goals; monitor your own attitudes/behavior; formatively evaluate your performance/progress; don't be afraid to ask questions and (re-) apply yourself. Good Luck!

Before embarking on the fieldtrip. **Read carefully through this GUIDE and WORKBOOK.** Spend enough time in preparation, both alone and together with groupmates and classmates, to enable you to have a pretty good overview of our planned trajectory through the place.

Start by reading through the accompanying handout entitled “Timescales” .
View the video; “Powers of Ten”.

Review the accompanying MUSEUM FLOOR PLANS.

Locate the entrance/exit we will be using.

Locate cloakrooms/restrooms

Trace the Path you will be following.

Reflect on and discuss expectations (hopes; apprehensions)

Prepare to do some fast-paced, serious, first-hand research.

Get ready to learn some valuable stuff and have some serious fun

Insofar as you can, try to engender in yourselves and each other the attitudes you would hope and expect to inform the exercise if it were an actual scientific expedition and if you and your groupmates/classmates actually are members of a research team embarking on a collaborative inquiry into the meaning of “quality” as the term applies to our field trip to the MFA “in search of quality.”

The point here is to give everyone a fair chance to experience themselves adopting (embodying?) a mental set and behavioral repertoire in which everyone endeavors to adopt for himself/herself the habits of thought and feeling and action (the intellectual and emotional expressions and investigative skills) that you know to be required of each and all serious students of the subject before us.

As scientifically-oriented observers, you will want to **document the experience.** Bring your journal and something to write/draw with. Start taking notes and making sketches! We will want to be able to identify, share, compare and contrast highlights (lowpoints) of our fieldtrip experiences. Everyone should also have with them, if possible, a digital camera that works in dim light. Flash photography is officially prohibited in the museum. (If your flash “accidentally goes off” expect an official admonishment to cease and desist from one or more of the museum employees who are responsible for enforcing the rules.) If you would like to have access to more specialized, higher resolution equipment, let us know, and we will try to help.)

In order to conduct ourselves in a manner that is as scientifically credible and otherwise trustworthy as possible, it behooves us to agree in advance to adopt and to maintain (in any moment or series of moments) a conscientiously alert and suitably serious scientific attitude and reliance on traditional research methods of procedure and documentation (Take notes and share thoughts and feelings about yourself in that environment on this fast-paced tour of select spaces in search of Quality.(make documentary images (e.e. digital photos), make observations, sketches/drawings in your journal.

In this connection, it seems necessary and desirable for all present intents and purposes for everyone involved in this exercise to make his/her way through the same spaces in the same order and with a particular view toward encountering, in a stipulated order, a designated set of locations, objects and or images in roughly the same order and under reasonably comparable conditions of exposure. This means that everyone should be going through the exhibits concurrently – but essentially solo. This will ensure that everyone passes from one display to the next in the same (roughly chronological) order. In sum, please try to follow quite faithfully the sequence of encounters numerically denoted in the

following pages.

Annotate your copy of the floorplan! Lay out on it any notes you want to make about the ITINERARY. As you go, keep track of where you are, where you have been and where you are heading. Pace yourself wisely. Keep track of the territory you have covered, are covering and have yet to cover in the time remaining. The point is to complete PART ONE in its entirety in the stipulated time (90 mins.)

Prepare both to do some **WORK** and have some **FUN!** Wear comfortable shoes. **Bring your student ID** (with which admission is FREE at all times during regular museum hours!). Be sure to have with you: **THIS GUIDE**, your **JOURNAL**, some **writing/drawing materials, a digital camera (if available) distance and reading glasses if you need them, and a timepiece.** Otherwise, bring as little stuff as possible. You are going to be doing a lot of walking -- covering a lot of ground, literally as well as figuratively. Best to travel "light."

Stay focused on the task of achieving the goal of the fieldtrip. You are on a SEARCH for QUALITY and time is short. You don't need to completely avoid interacting with classmates/groupmates. You are not expected to forego all social contact with others, but PLEASE TRY TO HELP YOURSELVES AND EACH OTHER BY ENABLING EVERYONE TO DO THE WORK OF PART ONE AS A SOLO EXERCISE. (Is there something peculiar and self-contradictory (oxymoronic even) about the idea of spending a few hours "searching" for quality and hoping/expecting something of value will be learned about artistic extensions of affect in this way? Might a better way to find Quality" be not to pursue it but rather let it come to you? What do you think? How do you feel? What is going to be your intended *modus operandi*?)

Take note of instances in which you find yourself surprised or pleased or stressed or annoyed or impressed or unimpressed or engaged/disengaged or attentive/distracted. Do you feel that the quality of your experience is being affected (for better, for worse) by your awareness of your surroundings? By the demand characteristics of the situation? How are you feeling about this exercise? The MFA? Its architecture? Its galleries? The works on exhibit? The objects to which your attention is being drawn by this document? Are there any objects that you are particularly attracted to (or repelled by) other than the ones selected for closer inspection? How do you feel about the galleries? The lighting? The acoustics? The presence of other members of the class and/or others? Do you feel unduly constrained or comfortably contained by the rigorous timeframe? How is the quality of your experience being influenced by having to follow these instructions? By knowing that you are on an officially-authorized MIT academic fieldtrip with others, incl. classmates/groupmates?

What does the MFA mean to you? What are you expecting to find there? What are you going to be on the lookout for? What is the purpose of this field trip? What is your attitude toward it? Write some ideas down. Talk these questions over with your group mates. Keep questions like them in mind as the exercise proceeds.

As Pirsig argues, if you want a "quality" outcome, it matters greatly whether or not you really "care about what you are doing". By hypothesis: you will have more fun and learn more from this exercise if you have some general idea of what to expect and can define your research objectives accordingly. It also helps to have a positive attitude and to be in a reasonably open frame of mind.

The field trip will be taking place in the evening.. In terms of normal circadian biorhythms, and associated "energy and arousal levels" the period just shortly after dinnertime normally is not a time of relative mental alertness and heightened attentiveness for most people. But be forewarned: to get the most out of this experience, you will need to be in a mentally and behaviorally proactive, engaged, and energetic frame of mind. Stay awake!

Be on the alert. "Psych yourself up" as you would approaching an important event, activity, or task. Expect the unexpected. Try to pay close attention to what is going on in your surroundings. As you board the bus ... en route and upon arrival, think about where you are heading, with whom you are traveling, and why. And what you think and feel about it. Be on the lookout for "distractions" as well as "attractions" – note the play of social influences upon your perceptions in relation to both routine and problematical aspects of what you are experiencing. What are you experiencing? And why?

As you travel – **OBSERVE AND INTROSPECT: REFLECT** on your own thoughts, feelings, and actions.

WHAT IS A MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS?

No doubt there are many ways of answering this question. In offering the following few we do not mean to cast doubt on other answers or to challenge their claims to legitimacy. Unsurprisingly, we owe the word "museum" -- as we do so much else -- to those who called themselves "Hellenes" and to whom we are accustomed to refer as "the Ancient Greeks."

Speaking literally, a museum is a "home of the Muses".

In the highly personalized classical mythology of the Ancient Hellenes the *Muses* were supernatural feminine beings of great *meaning and power*, variously personified as the daughters of (1) *Mnemosyne* (memory) and *Zeus* (first and foremost among the gods and goddesses of the "third generation" who were associated with Mt. Olympus), (2) *Harmony*, and (3) the primogenetrix Earth Goddess (*Gaea*)¹ and her "consort"- Heaven (*Uranus*).

More to the point, the Muses were widely revered as (1) divine creative spirits, revered sources of artistic inspiration for all mythmakers, storytellers and performers/artists (e.g. musicians; actors; mimes), and (2) the ultimate source of creative inspiration for all great works (i.e. of all humanly-made things of *value* and of *quality* in the realm of human activity); of all artistic, technical and scientific work of any significance. By extension, the *Muses* came to exemplify the ultimate source of everything *good* in the realm of humanity and (the rest of) nature, including human sapience, creativity, inspiration, thought, eloquence, productivity, clarity, conciseness, persuasion, knowledge, history, mathematics, astronomy, athletics, etc. etc.

Can you think of other ways in which "meaning" and "power" are identified with particular mythological personages in other traditions or cultures?

The MFA was founded in 1870. Five years earlier MIT (then "Boston Tech") had opened its doors to its first class. (There were 15 students. Do you know where the school was located? When did it move to its present site?) The MFA opened on its present site in the Back Bay Fens in 1909. From then until 1981, when the **WEST WING** was opened, the main entrance was the one (long closed but now happily reopened) on the **SOUTH SIDE** of the museum, in the center of the **MAIN BUILDING** on Huntington Avenue.² Later on, when the **EVANS WING** (on the Fenway side) was added, the museum could also be entered from the **NORTH**.

The MFA <http://www.mfa.org> is managed by a board of trustees that includes representatives from Harvard University, MIT, the Boston Athenaeum, the City of Boston, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, acting through a professional staff.³

Like MIT, the MFA advertises itself as an educational institution. A recent publicity brochure describes it as "a place of pleasure and discovery for individuals and families, museum members, and first-time visitors." Have you been here before? If this is your "first time," what kind of a place are you expecting it to be? Insofar as it actually is involved in and dedicated to the advancement of knowledge and learning, the MFA (like MIT) evidently is involved in a wide range of value-laden activities. (Can you think of some examples?)

Reflecting on your feelings about this experience in advance, please include consideration of the significance to you of the conjunction of the following collection of facts: You are visiting the MFA as an MIT undergraduate student on a field trip in a class that is advertised as dealing "feelings" and related things of an affective

¹ *Gaea* -- a/k/a *Gaia* or *Ge* -- is the primal progenetrix earth goddess of Ancient Greek mythology. Her etymological traces continue to show up among us in words like *geology* and *geography*.

² The **WEST WING** (1981) was designed by the architectural firm of I.M. Pei, and Partners. Pei, a native of China, and an MIT graduate, also designed the John Hancock Building in the Back Bay as well as the Green and Wiesner Buildings on the MIT campus, the new West Wing of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the new entrance and underground additions to the Louvre, in Paris, and many other notable structures worldwide.

³ For more details, see, e.g. [MFA, Illustrated Handbook](#).

character, and the class is about half-way through reading ZAAMM. What, if anything, is the field trip experience teaching you that might be of value in your future personal or professional life?

In approaching these questions, please bear in mind what has previously been said in class about the existence both of multiple perspectives and some general principles underlying any effort to inquire seriously into the organization (component parts; internal/external relations) and development (evolution/history; epigenesis/phylogenesis/ontogenesis) of human systems across a wide range of instances (e.g. human organisms, human artworks, human artifacts, etc.).

A point made before should not be forgotten: investigation reveals that there are some generic aspects of human systems – for example, cognitive, affective and receptive/expressive aspects relating to the organization and development of our personal mental lives and behavior -- are also manifested in counterpart forms at the (underlying) neurobiological and (surrounding) social and cultural levels.

If this actually is the case, then you should be able to discern their aesthetic counterparts in your encounters with and reactions to works of art (among other things). By extension, the same applies to what we know and can say about the organization and development of human social systems (including, of course, social institutions like families and clubs, churches, temples, teams, museums, schools, colleges, universities, corporations, etc.

How does this apply to the MFA? One obviously highly value-laden aspect of a museum's business (raison d'être) is that of defining, acquiring and exhibiting **quality** works in the general domain of the *fine arts*. What, precisely, does that mean?

WHAT IS "ART"?

My copy of a recently-published edition of the Random House Dictionary offers no less than 16 definitions and examples, almost all of which are obviously worthy of our consideration:

1. the quality, production, expression, or realm, according to aesthetic principles, of what is beautiful, appealing, or of more than ordinary significance. **2.** the class of objects subject to aesthetic criteria; works of art collectively, as paintings, sculptures, or drawings: a museum of art; an art collection. **3.** a field, genre, or category of art: Dance is an art. **4.** the fine arts collectively, often excluding architecture: art and architecture. **5.** any field using the skills or techniques of art: advertising art; industrial art. **6.** (in printed matter) illustrative or decorative material: Is there any art with the copy for this story? **7.** the principles or methods governing any craft or branch of learning: the art of baking; the art of selling; **8.** the craft or trade using these principles or methods. **9.** skill in conducting any human activity: a master at the art of conversation. **10.** a branch of learning or university study, esp. one of the fine arts or the humanities, as music, philosophy, or literature. **11. arts, a.** (used with a singular v.) the humanities: a college of arts and sciences. **b.** (used with a plural v.) See **liberal arts**. **12.** skilled workmanship, execution, or agency, as distinguished from nature. **13.** trickery; cunning: glib and devious art. **14.** studied action; artificiality in behavior. **15.** an artifice or artful device: the innumerable arts and wiles of politics. **16.** Archaic. science, learning or scholarship ...

What is "Fine" in the case of the fine arts? Who knows? Who is to say?

In the years since the MFA was first established, its resources, the quality of the collections, the beauty and elegance of its galleries and other public places and the range of the services it offers to visitors (and the surrounding community) have all expanded significantly in scope and grandeur and monetary value.

Today, most *cognoscenti* would probably agree that the MFA is a contender for inclusion in any list of world-class museum of art. OK, its not nearly as big and well-endowed and highly regarded as, say, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, or the Louvre in Paris, but it famously houses outstanding collections of Ancient African (e.g. Egyptian and Nubian), Mediterranean (e.g. Greek and Roman), Middle Eastern (e.g. Mesopotamian, Babylonian,

Iranian), Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Korean Oceanic), as well as more recent Western European and American works (i.e. art objects, including sculptures, paintings, prints, drawings, furniture, and decorative arts, including masks, tools, weapons, utensils, etc.).

How are acquisition and exhibition decisions currently being made?

What is the MFA for? What does it do?

Whose values does it represent?

What can an exploration of the form and content and history and *modus operandi* of the MFA teach us about the worldviews and valuesystems and lifestyles prevailing in contemporary Boston (US, “western,”) society?

Is the current economic situation adversely affecting the museum’s ability to fulfill its mandate?

Classical = Intellectual; Romantic = Emotional;

By an argument that we have already begun to consider elsewhere, **human mental life** exhibits two distinct yet deeply interrelated aspects: cognitive and affective; classical and romantic. Not surprisingly, art historians long have long recognized the existence of these two corresponding modes of artistic expression. Further to the point: Just as individual artists have sometimes moved back and forth and used more or less emotional or intellectual approaches, so too has the art of different periods. The following scheme is drawn from a current art history text. Although oversimplified, it usefully suggests that transgenerational movements from one extreme to the other have long tended to occur in cycles, with quickening shifts in relatively recent times and with both extremes existing concurrently at present.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

Thus, in the extreme, the romantic or affectively charged approach is both expressive and impressionistic in the sense that it aims to evoke intense personal involvement by the viewer. Toward this end, romantic art commonly

involves fairly intense, active and warm (sometimes brightly colorful) interpretation of the subject, with strong intimations of movement (often violent or exaggerated), much interest in stressing natural features and a definitely personal and intimate approach by the artist to the subject.

By contrast, (and, again, at its most extreme), a classical or intellectual approach is cool, detached, realistic, and analytical. It places great value on formal elements of design, composition, symmetry, etc., lends itself much more readily to a cool, literal or rational interpretation, and conforms more closely to conventional rules, with priority given to neat clean arrangements and proper proportions. It values both narrative and compositional considerations most highly and is not primarily intended to evoke strong feelings or emotions.

That having been said, you should not be surprised to discover many cases in which what you experience as the strongly felt psychological impact of your encounter with a given work turns out on further consideration to be due to an artful blending of classical and romantic elements.

NOTE: Each year, a bit more than a week before the field-trip, I go to the MFA and check to confirm the locations of the objects to be viewed. I do so because it is not at all uncommon for things to be moved around from time to time. This year, the museum is undergoing a major renovation and expansion, and I was very much surprised to discover the extent to which the open gallery space has been reduced to accommodate the new construction. Several of the major exhibition spaces are temporarily closed and many notable works have either been placed in storage or have been moved to other locations within the museum. This has necessitated some major revisions in the field-trip itinerary.

DEPARTURE

Our chartered bus will be available for boarding on the north side of Vassar Street, directly in front of the Departmental entrance two stories beneath our classroom from approximately 6:50 pm. Departure will be at precisely 7:06 p.m. WE WILL NOT WAIT BEYOND THAT TIME! DON'T BE LATE!

If you miss the bus, or are unable to make the trip with the class on the designated day and appointed time, you will be missing out on an important part of your 9.68/09 learning experience. At very least, you must make it your business to visit the museum on your own (or better yet with at least a few classmates) before the next class meeting. Be sure to follow the itinerary and complete the assignments described. See the accompanying flyer/floor plan for information regarding MFA hours and access.

The field trip consists of an ARRIVAL AND INTRODUCTION portion, followed by TWO MAIN PHASES

Each PHASE has a different goal and involves somewhat different methods of procedure.

Within the MFA, this itinerary has generally endeavored to follow a long and roughly chronological developmental sequence that might be said to begin in "the dark backward and abysm of time" (Shakespeare – See "TIMESCALES" Handout). However, the MFA is currently undergoing some large-scale renovations and expansions and this has caused a major reduction in the number of open galleries. As one guide put it to me: "Everything is being moved around like crazy." As a consequence, some of the items we have previously included are not presently on display and others have been temporarily moved. Alas, some of the continuity has been lost and it has been necessary to abbreviate the whole exercise a bit.

PHASE ONE is divided into THREE main parts. To complete the entire exercise you will pass through a substantial portion of the MFA, getting a synoptic overview of the place and having your attention drawn (all too briefly) to a series of **twenty-eight** specific objects and/or areas representing various eras, traditions genres and subjects relevant to our "inquiry into values". Try to visit the designated sites (sights) in the indicated sequence. Completing the three parts of PHASE ONE should take around 90 minutes (from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.) This "solo whirlwind tour" approach is intended, in part, to provide you with a general overview of the periods and cultures and genres represented in its many halls and galleries. In the process, this guide will draw your attention to a mere 28 specific objects selected from the "on display" fraction of the museum's collection of more than 2 million objects!

You will have a lot of territory to cover in PHASE ONE.⁴

We suggest a strategy for those of you who want to derive a substantial educational benefit from this experience: Be prudent. Pace yourself carefully. In addition to doing this first part of the exercise alone -- incommunicado -- solo, don't allow yourself to become unduly diverted between objectives. Spending, on average, at least one or two thoughtful moments with each of the 28 areas/objects that you are being asked to examine in PHASE ONE will not leave a lot of time for diversions.

Since the prescribed path will take you through a substantial fraction of the museum's galleries and exhibit areas, you should expect to be tempted to focus your attention on various objects along the way. Feel free to do so. But only briefly. Try to resist becoming sidetracked. As you move into and through the MFA, please don't forget that it is a public place and that our fieldtrip is an official MIT academic activity. WALK. DO NOT RUN. Let's all try to represent MIT responsibly, as visitors from one academic community visiting another: We are exploring the MFA for MIT educational purposes. We are here to learn by looking: DON'T TOUCH ANY OBJECTS ON DISPLAY; RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF OTHER MFA VISITORS; IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY, OBEY INSTRUCTIONS OF MUSEUM STAFF MEMBERS.

⁴ As a rough guide to the scale of the space you will be traversing in PHASE ONE, consider this: on a recent Sunday morning, with the place quite crowded with visitors, it took my wife and me around 20 minutes to traverse the indicated PHASE ONE distance. Our pace was quite vigorous, and we didn't pause to make any detailed inspections of any of the indicated areas and objects.

As already noted, the principal aim of **PHASE ONE** (from around 7:30 to 9:00 P.M.) is to provide you with a broad, if necessarily somewhat superficial, schematic overview of the museum as a whole by surveying some of its notable contents in a roughly chronological sequence. At the same time we will be drawing your attention to a particular subset of works illustrative of the issues of central concern to us as manifested in a diversity of cultures and periods and genres represented in the MFA's collections.

If you are physically challenged in a way that will make it difficult or impossible for you to easily make your way through the MFA on foot, please let us know in advance, and we will try to help you make some alternative arrangements.)

Notice that the bottom of the floor plans -- as printed on **page 11** -- is south.

An abbreviated chronology/timetable for the trip is included on **pages 2 and 3 (above)** – See **Timescales document for more detail.**

Before the field trip you should have read carefully through this GUIDE and the “Timescales” document.

You should also have some idea in advance of what you are going to do with item **•13: See pp 30-33 below**

In **PHASE TWO** there will be a distinct change of pace. You can slow down, reflect a bit and then begin focusing on some aspect(s) of your MFA experience which you find intellectually and/or emotionally "affecting" (for better or worse). Focus, if you like, on some particular work or on a historical period, cultural tradition, or genre. **PHASE TWO** will take about 45 minutes (from 9:00 p.m. to 9:45 p.m.) We should thus be able complete the entire field-trip exercise in the time that we have available (between 7:20 and 9:50 P.M).

ARRIVAL (7:20-7:30 PM)

Our estimated time of arrival at the Fenway Entrance to the MFA (below) is 7:20 PM.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

Feel free to leave bulky jackets and coats, heavy bookbags, and other weighty personal/professional belongings on the bus. They will be safe and we can thus avoid waiting in long lines at the MFA checkroom at closing time. If you have any stuff that you don't feel safe leaving on the bus, you can check it (for free) at a checkroom just inside the museum near the Fenway entrance.

Floor Plans on next page. Upper edge is NORTH. Black numerals indicate approximate locations of items described in the text that follows:

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

We enter the museum (on the **FIRST FLOOR** level), via the Fenway Entrance.

Admission to the MFA was always free to all until around a decade ago. It is still free (at any time) to MIT students with valid ID. Be prepared to show your MIT ID to the security guard at the point of entry. You will be handed a little metal badge. Please put it on and wear it prominently displayed during your visit. (Optional: keep wearing it daily at MIT until our next class and keep track of any remarks that get made or questions that get asked about it.) Keep track as well of any relevant conversations that you have with others about any aspect of the field trip experience.) Are you "traveling light?" Have you got your eyeglasses, your JOURNAL and something to write with? There is a free **CHECK ROOM** along the corridor around to the left of the central **EVANS WING** staircase .

•**1** Enter the **HEMICYCLE GALLERY IMMEDIATELY TO THE RIGHT (west) OF THE STAIRCASE.**

As already mentioned, the MFA is undergoing a major expansion, at the institution is using this transition period, in part, as an opportunity to advertise itself and its development to the public. Can anything about the valuesystem of the MFA be learned by taking note of how it presents itself during this transition?

Follow the curving corridor all the way around, examining the images hanging on the wall. The proceeding to the way around, examining the pictures hanging on the wall. Proceed next to

•**2** **The Scharf Visitor Center** Where the self-advertising continues. Let this space serve as a rendezvous point at the completion of the fieldtrip!

Moving south, exit the visitor center and proceed southeast to the elevator.

Take the elevator to the second floor and enter

•**3** the **UPPER ROTUNDA**. Look around and up. The artworks around the walls and on the ceiling are the work of John Singer Sargent. They were begun in 1917. What is their theme? And what can be said about the imagery and symbolism that is on view here? Throughout the end of the 19th century, comparisons (and conflicts) between *romantic* and *classical* perspectives figured prominently in discussions going on in literary, artistic, academic and cultural circles in New England and elsewhere. On the middle left ceiling panel, (see figure below left) Sargent depicts *Apollo* (the sun god) presiding over a contest between the two. On the left, representing all that is romantic and sensuous in the arts since the times of the ancients, is a naked *Dionysus* with *Pan* and the whole of living nature backing him up. On the right, representing the classical perspective a virginal maiden – the archetypal embodiment of the ethereal values of goodness and truth, beauty, purity, innocence and virtue -- gestures toward the heavens, supported from behind by a seated *Athena* (goddess of knowledge and war) who appears to be pushing her own more warlike aspects into the background.

See also, *Psyche* and *Eros* (below right)

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

And Apollo and the Muses (below)

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

PART ONE: ANCIENT ROOTS OF THE “WESTERN” TRADITION

Allow about 15 mins. (Roughly 7:30-7:45 p.m.)

* * *

We use the term "history" in reference to situations in which there is a more or less conscious and deliberate (narratized) remembrance of things past. The term thus implies or presupposes the existence of a human tradition that has been transgenerationally maintained and communicated.

Needless to say, the boundary line between human "history" and "prehistory" is inevitably "fuzzy." For many of us who are or aspire to be scientists, technologists, engineers, architects (and planners), managers (and financiers) there is a prevailing tendency to trust conclusions only insofar as they are arrived at via rational and quantitative methods of procedure of the kinds that ostensibly characterize the so-called "hard" sciences. (This is classical!)

Our credulousness in this respect engenders, in turn, a sometimes quite un-self-critical intolerance for the "softness" or "fuzziness" or "vagueness" normally associated with all things romantic. About that which we hold dear we feel strongly protective (defensive?). Values are akin to "affect" and thus linked to "feelings." Our values subjectively inform our opinions, shaping our attitudes, engendering and reinforcing our biases. By way of example, consider the affective intensity with which some scientists tend to maintain that "feelings" and "values" have no proper place in the substantive content of science or the scientific inquiry process.

The position taken here is that fuzziness is an inescapable fact of human experience and is thus inherent in all epistemological, axiological and methodological ideals of modern experimental science. As a result, a modicum of ambiguity (uncertainty, complementarity, relativity, etc.) inevitably attends all of our best-intended efforts to precisely define (e.g.) the boundaries of living systems. This is a difficult idea to accept. The point is worth pursuing a bit further.

In their highly informative Historical Introduction, the editors of the Oxford English Dictionary (1927) have the following to say about "the vocabulary of ... widely diffused and highly cultivated natural human languages:"

“The Vocabulary ... is not a fixed quantity circumscribed by definite limits. The vast aggregate of words and phrases ... presents, to the mind that endeavors to grasp it as a definite whole, the aspect of one of those nebulous masses familiar to the astronomer, in which a clear and unmistakable nucleus shades off on all sides, through zones of decreasing brightness, to a dim marginal film that seems to end nowhere, but to lose itself imperceptibly in the surrounding darkness. In its constitution, it may be compared to one of those natural groups of the zoologist or botanist, wherein typical species forming the characteristic nucleus of the order, are linked on every side to other species, in which the typical character is less and less distinctly apparent, till it fades away in an outer fringe of aberrant forms which merge imperceptibly in various surrounding orders, and whose position is ambiguous and uncertain. For the convenience of classification, the naturalist may draw the line which bounds a class or order, outside or inside of a particular form; but Nature has drawn it nowhere. ... And there is absolutely no defining line in any direction. ...

The language presents yet another undefined frontier when it is viewed in relation to *time*. The living vocabulary is no more permanent in its constitution than definite in its extent. It is not today what it was a century ago, still less what it will be a century hence. Its constituents are in a state of slow but incessant dissolution and renovation. ...

... And the farther back we go, the more imperfect are the records, the smaller is the fragment of the actual Vocabulary that we can recover.” **(The proposition to consider is that this is the situation regarding our understanding of systems more generally.)**

BEGINNINGS – According to the Cosmic Calendar (see Appended TIMELINE) it is 12/31at 23:59:00 – that is: 26,500 yrs –883 human generations –a mere minute -- ago

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

No living memory links us with the origins of art. (Let alone the origins of our species, our planet, solar system and

universe.⁵) Just as we know very little about the lives of the first human users of tools or fire, so, we know next to nothing about the people who made the first flaked rock tools (see below) or the earliest painters whose images covered the walls of caves, some 20,000 years ago, in what is now France. The creators of ancient artifacts and images may have been illiterate and living challenging lives amid many and varied inclemencies but they were not ever without some form of culture. They had no books, no cameras, no ball-point pens, no computers, no iron, no steel, no silicon, no electricity, no electronics, no teevee, no ipods or cell-phones but they lived in extended families, transgenerationally, among others of their own kinds and had managed to equip themselves with survival tools and techniques. They lived on the same planet as we do they had a less panoptic view of the world they lived in and they had no audiovisual aids, no electronic communications technologies, no instantaneous and all-pervasive and highly invasive (corporate controlled) communications media....;

And they must have had something resembling what we today call science (the “know what”) and the material technology (the “know-how”) needed to survive and to reproduce themselves. Can you see the world as they saw it? Try to imagine how their mental activity and behavior resembled and differed from ours. Can we be at all sure that they possessed mental and behavioral characteristics (e.g. intellectual capacities aesthetic sensibilities sensory and motor abilities (skills? Aptitudes? Inclinations? Etc. like ours? Accompanying and perhaps facilitating the spread of the first modern humans across Europe was a distinctive stone-and-bone technology called the Aurignacian industry. Aurignacian tools include split-based spear points made of bone and stone as well as a type of engraving tools called burins. In the eyes of many archeologists, Aurignacian and later Upper Paleolithic tools, despite their wider variety and regional variability, fall easily into clear categories, unlike the more uniform Middle Paleolithic technology associated with Neanderthals and, in the Middle East, with early anatomically modern humans. As opposed to the "one tool does all" approach to technology among Neandertals, as one authority notes, "When you get to modern humans, it's like going to a hardware store." They left signs in the form of decorated artifacts. Presumably they meant those signs to mean something and knew what those signs meant to them. But they left us no written interpretations, and their messages are at best imperfectly understood by us.

Cyril Stanley Smith, the late MIT Institute Professor of Metallurgy, and a noted authority on the history of materials science and technology searched the world for the earliest evidence of human knowledge regarding the nature and behavior of materials. What he found goes back to prehistoric times and is coextensive with the oldest surviving human artifacts. That is, to objects of the kind commonly sought after by and displayed in art museums!

Until recently, one of the oldest pieces in the MFA were on display in the (now closed) narrower of the two **Egyptian Galleries** just to the east of the Upper Rotunda. Unfortunately objects themselves are not presently on display. So the following images of **PALEOLITHIC OBJECTS** will have to suffice for our purposes.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

Here and in what follows, occasionally pause to reflect on the implications, if any, that you are inclined to draw about the

⁵ This issue is discussed in the appended Timescales handout.

concept of **quality** as it relates to **art** and **technology**.

As already noted, "history," in our (so-called "western") tradition, is roughly coextensive with "recorded history," and that is commonly said to have begun with the Neolithic or "new stone" age and the agriculture-based urban civilizations of the ancient Near East between 6,000 and 8,000 years ago (**or 23:59:47 – 13 seconds before the present, according to the appended Timeline**).

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

As the interdependence and trade between rural farmers and urban dwellers increased, the earliest cities -- the first agriculture-based urban societies -- began to emerge. And with them came the art of writing -- thus signaling (in our traditionally eurocentric way of thinking about it), the world development toward "higher" (literate, monumental) civilizations. In any case, while it is now generally believed that the most likely "birthplace" of humanity lies elsewhere (to the south, in central/southern Africa, most likely), it is to the "cradle" of our civilization that we must look if we want to find the "beginning of history." (And the cradle included ancient Iraq, of course.)

As far as is known, this aspect of the development of our species began sometime during the earlier part of the fourth millennium before the present era, in the presently much-troubled region we today call the "Middle-East," just north and west of the gulf variously called "Arabian" or "Persian" -- in the fabled precincts of Babylonia, Assyria, and Mesopotamia -- when a mysterious people of unknown provenance -- called by scholars the *Sumerians* -- began settling the fertile mudlands of the Tigris-Euphrates valleys, in present-day Iraq.

By **5500 years ago, (12/31 @ 23:59:49 BP)** they had established clusters of little, brick-built city-states -- Ur, Kish, Lagash, Shuruppak, Uruk, Ubaid, Nippur, etc. Each of these was organized around a monumental temple compound where the presiding priests (legend tells us) invented the arts of writing and reckoning and devised a remarkably exact science of astronomical observation, which revealed the cosmos to be ordered in ways that are mathematically expressible! **It is ten seconds before midnight.**

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EGYPT IN THE PYRAMID AGE: The larger **Egyptian Gallery** immediately to the east of the upper rotunda contains what a museum brochure calls, "the finest collection of Old Kingdom Egyptian art outside of the Cairo Museum." Egyptian art is, of course, African art, and you should be able to recognize here some striking continuities with the Nubian material that you saw downstairs.

Egypt's Old Kingdom or Pyramid Age spans slightly more than 500 years (i.e. 2780-2258 BC.) and corresponds to the time between the founding of the Third and the fall of the Sixth Dynasties. Overall, it was a period characterized by an absolute concentration of authority and wealth in the hands of a royal household. In the Fourth Dynasty (2680-2565 BC.) a maximum level of central political power was reached, symbolized in material form by the building of the Great Pyramid of Cheops at Giza, now situated on the Egyptian desert some 10 miles west of the modern City of Cairo. The construction of pyramids, tombs and temples on such a tremendous scale had a great impact on the life of the Egyptian people. Indeed, the Pyramid Age was marked (as might be expected) by the neglect of much-needed public works, the dissipation of national wealth, and the breakdown of material infrastructure. Some observers have drawn a parallel to more recent developments, including the impact of -cold war- military/industrial expenditures on the social and material infrastructure of the contemporary US. and (former) USSR. It is uncertain whether or to what extent the causes of the decline in Egypt were famine or plague or internal strife or some combination thereof, but, a complete breakdown of law and order occurred and the Sixth Dynasty was followed by a period of political chaos.

Of the many remarkable objects in this **Egyptian Gallery**, there are two to which you should pay particular attention:

•4: The pair statue of KING MYCERINIUS -- third and last of the Pharaohs of the Fourth Dynasty -- and his wife, QUEEN KHAMERERNEBTY II is one of the finest examples of ancient Egyptian art anywhere. Nobility is here blended with intimacy in one of the most famous of all works of this period. This piece actually is part of a grouping that embodies -- together with the mummies -- ancient Egyptian ideas about the "here and now" and the "hereafter."

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

•5:

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This “reserve head” is more than 4000 years old! What can be learned about the valuesystems of the ancients from an examination of ancient artifacts? Scores of human generations and innumerable cultural transformations separate us from them, are we still cognitively and affectively connected with them? Looking at these artifacts in the only way we can -- e.g. with our own eyes and in our own time -- can we see anything of quality in these ancient artifacts. (If not, why not? if so, how? and in what respects?). More to the point, as students of affect, can we read anything from these objects regarding the sensibilities of the people whose society produced them? What can be reasonably conjectured about the minds and hands (mens et manus) of the people to whom these objects were something other than ancient artifacts in a modern-day museum? Think about the beliefs, the values (e.g. aesthetic), the history of those people. Consider the level of anatomical knowledge likely to exist in a society where the embalming of corpses is a practice combining scientific knowledge and religious faith; look out for any resonances/dissonances between what you see here (on the one hand) and your own artistic/ aesthetic sensibility; can you find any evidence here to support (or refute) the conclusion that high quality materials science and technology existed in Africa 4000 years ago? Is it surprising to you to discover that North African and Middle- (or Near-) Eastern sculptors living and working in the Third Millennium, BC. had already mastered not only the difficult technique of massive stone construction but had also solved the problem of carving anatomically correct and emotionally expressive hard stone figures and heads?

Walk east through the **Egyptian Galleries** to the far end and descend to the first floor. **Enter the Ancient Near Eastern Gallery.** You are headed for the mummies but pause in passing to examine the frieze **6:** (below) and the map on the floor. Note that many of the objects in this room are from ancient Iraq and Iran and that many of them date back to the height of the first great Sumerian civilizations, 5,300 years or 177 generations ago.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

By some 4,000 years (133 generations) ago: Hammurabic legal codes in Babylonia (Iraq); Times of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt; *Book of the Dead*; *Edwin Smith Medical Papyrus*.

ANCIENT IMAGES OF LIFE IN DEATH: •7: the MUMMIES! How does what we know about Ancient Egyptian attitudes toward their royal dead relate to our notions of what they thought about the relative importance of the contents of the cranial and thoracic/abdominal cavities? We know next to nothing about Ancient notions of “mind,” but we can draw a few inferences from early accounts of the cavalier manner in which Egyptian embalmers treated the brains of the corpses they were preparing for mummification.

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CLASSICAL AND ROMANTIC ANTIQUITY: THE ANCIENT GREEKS AND ROMANS:

Return to the second floor via the stairway that you just recently descended. Turn right at the head of the stairs and enter the Greek Gallery in the southeasternmost corner of the museum.

As Pirsig tells us, we must look to the Ancient Greeks for the beginnings of the philosophical frame of reference within which (according to Pirsig's nameless narrator in *ZAAMM*) his ghostlike alter ego, Phaedrus set out to "pursue the ghost of rationality."

Reference has already been made to the existence of a richly symbolic and enduringly meaningful Greek **CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY** much older than anything that has come down to us in material form from the Ancient Greeks. Long before the advent of anything in the way of "natural philosophy" or "technology" there existed an orally transmitted body of traditional lore full of supernatural personages. In the *Iliad*, for example, the supposedly blind bard Homer (below right), offers a poetically vivid and lively account of a transgenerationally inherited series of myths or legends. In Homeric lore, humans and supernatural personages interact in memorable episodes or vignettes or encounters relating to things and events of a spiritual, folkloric, ritual, and fantastic nature going on at the interface between earthly and heavenly dominions. Ancient Greek philosophers and artists and natural scientists grounded much of their own approach to certain subjects and themes in this tradition.

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Pertinently, it is out of the cultural framework of Ancient Greece that our whole –western- mode of rational discourse has grown. As we saw last week in class, we likewise owe to the Ancient Greeks the background and context for our exploration of such abstract subjects as the idea of "mind" and the careers of both the **CLASSICAL** and the **ROMANTIC** perspectives in philosophy. We begin our examination of these borrowings in the **Greek Gallery** on the second floor in the southeasternmost corner of the museum. Four objects in this room are of particular interest to us in this connection.

The first is **•8:**

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•9: The second object is located around the middle of the gallery. It is a statue of Athena Parthenos. (see page after next) Partheno- is a combining form literally meaning “without fertilization.” In Athena's case, the name entails a double meaning. The first reference is to her –masculine virgin birth. To be more precise: she was said to have sprung, fully formed and fully armed, – without female involvement in her conception and birth – from the forehead of her –father, Zeus, first and foremost of the Olympian Gods of the Ancient Greek Pantheon. According to the myth she emerged uttering a war-whoop which resounded in heaven and earth. The second reference is to her as a maiden (virgin) goddess -- the goddess of both war and knowledge!. Apart from Athens, to which she gave her name, there were temples dedicated to her, as protectress, in the citadels of many Greek cities and towns. Her attributes were distinctly both masculine and war-like: her emblems were the spear, the helmet and the aegis (a shield or breastplate). (We also know her, of course, as the namesake of MIT’s campus-wide educational computing system. This statue is a Roman copy of a much larger version said to have been executed by the Greek sculptor Pheidias sometime between 447 and 438 BC.

As already mentioned, Greek mythology eventually informed and gave rise to a more secular "natural philosophy" whose adherents and practitioners were priests/professors of a kind. Most were more or less self-conscious "teachers" and (philos sofias = devotees/lovers of wisdom). The third object:

A bust supposedly of a particularly notable one -- the fabled Socrates (469 to 399

BC.) -- is located nearby. •10:

Socrates. This old battered head sits on a pedestal near a model of the Parthenon (see below). It was found at Athens and is believed to be a copy made in Roman times of an original done some 70 years after his death by the Greek sculptor Lysippos. His contemporaries and followers included Herodotus, Alcmaeon of Croton, Hippocrates of Cos, Aristophanes, Plato, Archimedes, Euclid. His students and disciples included two, Xenophon and Plato, who authored many texts in which their fabled teacher is described. In the better-known works of the latter, Socrates is constantly found in conversation with various members of his (overwhelmingly male) coterie of devoted followers. From a pedagogical point of view it is pertinent to realize that many of the more influential of the platonic *Dialogues* are set in the preeminently male social contexts of informal eating and drinking parties. To such gatherings were given the name: *Symposium* (the prefixes *sym=syn=sys* = "together). Among this group of dialogues is one entitled the Phaedrus. This may be taken as a sign of the influence of the philosophy of the platonic Socrates on that of Pirsig, his narrator, and the latter's "wolf-like" alter ego. It is also worth noting in passing that the educational tradition that Plato started

has continued, more or less uninterrupted, to the immediate present. In this masculine tradition, Socrates represents a new kind of hero. Plato wrote several *Dialogues* concerning his indictment, trial, conviction and execution?

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–*The Death of Socrates*,– by Jacques Louis David, NY, The Metropolitan Museum of Art:
From the fourth of our selected objects in this room, you can get some sense of the environment in which the Athenians of Plato's and Socrates' time lived and worked.

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This is: **•11:** the grand model of THE ATHENIAN ACROPOLIS. The Acropolis is the name of the hill on whose flattened top stood the great temple (the Parthenon), along with other significant buildings. It was at the foot of the Acropolis -- in the residential and commercial center of the city, the Agora -- that Socrates and his contemporaries met and held dialogue. Just as it is mainly from Plato that we get our image of the fabled Socrates, so it is from Plato's most illustrious student, Aristotle, that we get the earliest surviving articulation of the idea that there is "one and only one" fully creditable mode of scientific thinking: To be more precise, the modern western scientific perspective is predicated in large part on the categorical (either/or) logic that has been inherited from Aristotle. Notably, it was upon this "perfectly rational" categorical (either/or) logic that Aristotle predicated his "law of the excluded middle," and which – muddled as it may be -- remains, to this day, the centerpiece of what has since become the modern scientific paradigm.⁶ In effect, it is to this Aristotelian logic that Pirsig is referring when he has his narrator discuss "the knife." Is there any reason to believe in a

⁶ Much, much, later, in the 17th century, the French philosopher/mathematician, Rene Descartes would take both of these ideas, (categorical logic and excluded middle) and couple them with the further idea of the "Archimedean Point," thereby creating what has come to be called (rather imprecisely) **THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD**. But that is another story for another time. Suffice it for present purposes merely to point out that what began with Socrates and Plato and Aristotle, eventually became cartesian/newtonian rationalism, mechanism and reductionism that, taken as a whole, forms the quintessentially cognitive basis of the CLASSICAL/ROMANTIC SPLIT and is the main source of the worldview, valuesystem and lifestyle that we know as "modern."

more inclusive (relativistic, complementaristic, kind of scientific understanding?).

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R: Rafael, *School of Athens*, Detail. The men depicted as walking and talking in center are intended to be Plato (left) and Aristotle

Passing next into the **Roman Gallery**, We are approaching the threshold of the present (Common or Christian era); Ptolemaic astronomy, Rise of the Roman Empire; lifetimes of Jesus, Ovid, Galen (others)
Indian arithmeticians are just about now inventing the concept of “zero” and learning to use decimals.
Pause to examine

•**12**: the posthumous portrait
head of the emperor Augustus

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

PART TWO: ORIGINS AND ARTIFACTS IN OTHER ANCIENT TRADITIONS •13:

There are many other eras and cultures that deserve attention. Each of us has personal/social connections with one or more cultural backgrounds. Due to limitations of time, we ask you to **choose one tradition from the ten listed below (13A-K)**. We suggest (but do not require) that your choice be governed by the fact of your own cultural background. Allow about 15 mins. (Roughly 7:45-8:00 p.m.)

13a-13f. INTERESTED IN FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BUDDHA? You have a number of great options.)

Asian collection of the Museum of Fine Arts occupies no less than twenty-six galleries on the first and second floors of the museum. It is regarded by some as the finest overall collection of oriental art under one roof anywhere outside of Asia.

In the sixth century BCE, Siddhartha Gautama -- the historical Buddha -- founded what was destined to become a new and widely influential faith. Legend has it that he was born into a wealthy and elite Indian family, and turned away from a life of privilege in order to seek spiritual perfection or "enlightenment." The latter, according to his teachings, is a condition or state that human beings can attain or achieve through renunciation of earthly cares and desires.

13a: INDIAN

Buddhism began in India, and, the **Indian Gallery** is a good place to see some early Buddhist art, but here we focus on an early Hindu sculpture of the elephant-headed body of a boy. This is the god Ganesha; a deity traditionally regarded as a temple guardian and guide who helps the faithful to avoid or overcome obstacles encountered on the path to enlightenment. He appears here together with his two consorts -- "success" and "prosperity". The rat (below) is his mode of transportation.

What might Ganesha be seeing in you as you look at him this evening?

In examining sculptures of this kind, it is important to understand that, in many traditional cultures, statues of gods and goddesses were regarded as both representations and physical embodiments of the depicted personage(s)-- supposedly able to see as well as to be seen by the worshipful.. The one-sidedness of this work suggests that it was probably intended to be mounted on a wall outside of a temple or temple compound. As such, it is likely to have been among the first gods to be encountered by (and to encounter) the reverent pilgrim who respectfully circles the outside of the premises before prayerfully entering.

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Archaeological and literary evidence indicates that Buddhism was carried from India to China during the latter years of the Han Dynasty (207 BC.-220 AD.). It extended thence to Korea and, much later, to Japan. As it spread throughout Asia (and beyond) Buddhism underwent many and varied modifications, with different Buddhas worshipped in different ways by different sects in different times and places. The MFA collection includes many images of the Buddha in a host of beautiful, fantastic, and

awe-inspiring guises. In examining Asian portraits and related works for aesthetic quality, it is important to understand that the traditional eastern notion of portraiture differs from the western. Whereas the latter commonly concentrates on the individuality of the person depicted and centers on the question of likeness (i.e. what we usually want to know about it is whether the image accurately represents the subject) the former tradition is one in which, by contrast, individuals define themselves through their positions within the family, social class, or religious group and their interpersonal relationships. Asian portraiture accordingly often is societally oriented and composite. In other words, the figures need to be "read" more as a depictions of general types rather than likenesses of particular individuals.

In search of other ancient cultures?

Proceeding westward to the end of the Indian gallery.

13b. In the southwest corner of the building you will find the b Korean gallery. y: Medical Buddha.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

Also on this floor: 13e: Southeast Asian, 13g Islamic, 13h: African, 13i: Oceanic and 13j. Native American exhibits. The 13c: Japanese, 13d: Chinese and 13f Himalayan Galleries are on the second floor.

13c: JAPAN: Climb the stairs to the **SECOND FLOOR** and proceed straight ahead (west) to the **Japanese Buddhist Sculpture Gallery**. This -temple room- gallery was built at the beginning of this century, and recently refinished. It follows the traditions of eighth and ninth century Japanese Buddhist architecture. All of the statues in it are made of wood, and date from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries. Included among them is a portrait of Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha. The goal of the faithful Buddhist is to transcend the desires and sorrows of earthly existence, through enlightenment and to thereby escape from the otherwise supposedly endless cycles of mortal reincarnation. A Bodhisattva is an enlightened one who, has chosen to remain among humankind as a guide or preceptor.

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13.d: CHINA: On the second floor you will find the **Chinese Pottery Galleries, and Chinese Furniture Gallery**. Exiting via the easternmost door.

1,500 years (50 generations) ago -- Rome Falls; Rise of Islam; Arab Culture flourishes; Moslem Conquests.

13e: SOUTHEAST ASIAN

13f: HIMALAYAN GALLERIES ARE ON THE SECOND FLOOR

13g: ISLAMIC: Islamic art, flourished from the 9th through the 15th centuries Below: Persian (Iranian) plate, 12th century.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

13h: AFRICAN,

13i: OCEANIC,

13j: NATIVE AMERICAN

(20 Generations) ago – 12/31 @ 11:59:59:00 –

1001-1500 -- 1,000 – 500 years (33-17) Generations) ago – Mayan and other Native American Civilizations Flourish; Sung Dynasty in China; Byzantine Empire in Europe and Middle East; Mongol Invasion; anti-Muslim Christian Crusades
Columbus' Voyages.

WHEN YOU HAVE COMPLETED THIS PART OF THE EXERCISE, RETURN TO THE UPPER ROTUNDA.

PART THREE: WESTERN TRADITIONS:

A. EUROPE FROM THE 15TH TO THE 20TH CENTURY

Allow about 30 minutes (Roughly 8:15-8:30 p.m.)

The capture of Constantinople (now Istanbul) by forces of the Turkish Empire, in 1453, effectively ended a protracted period of hegemony by European merchants over commercial traffic on the long-established overland trade routes to and from India and China and the rest of the "Far East" (notice the Eurocentrism of this geographical designation). This loss of control triggered in Christian Europe (first in the Catholic Portugal of Prince Henry the Navigator, and later in Ferdinand and Isabella's Catholic Spain), efforts to find alternative sea routes that would outflank the Moslems.

Henry had been sending sailors south since early in the 15th century. In 1492, Spain sent Columbus in search of a westward passage to "the Indies." The Portuguese did not reach Cathay until 1498, but, by then, Columbus had already unwittingly blundered upon what would become Europe's self-styled "New World."

In terms of its human and ecological impacts, there can be no doubt, the European "discovery" of "previously unknown" lands led to historically unprecedented kinds and degrees of genocidal violence by men whose worldviews were both incurably "romantic" and quintessentially "classical."

- 1501-1600 – 500-400 years (17-14 Generations) ago. Here begins the last second of the last minute of the last hour of the last day of the last month of the Cosmic Year: advent of Copernican Astronomy It is the beginning of "Modern Times"
- 1601-1700 --400-300 years (13-11 Generations) ago –Scientific and cultural renaissance in Europe; Voyages of Discovery and Conquest from Europe and China; Emergence of modern scientific method; Galileo, Descartes, Pascal, Newton, Leibniz ...
- 1701-1800 -- 300-200 years (10-7 Generations) ago Large-scale colonial expansion from Europe
- 1801-1900 – 200-100 years (7-3 Generations) ago. Industrial Age Opens
- 1900-2000 – 100-0 years (3-0 Generations) ago. The 20th century

We will continue to consider European art of the Renaissance in the **William I. Koch Gallery of EARLY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS**: on the second floor. The work here reflects some of what has been happening in European painting preceding and during the Renaissance.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

See **•14:** Francesco del Cairo Italian (1598-1674) Herodias with head of St John the Baptist (right)

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

Continue through the Koch gallery, exiting at the north end and bear left around the EVANS WING stairway, Turn left and enter the Medieval Gallery see: **15:** THE MADONNA IN THE CLOUDS (about 1425-35), by the Italian master Donatello

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

Exit the Medieval Gallery. Turn RIGHT (EAST) and proceed until you reach the 17th Century Dutch and Flemish Gallery at the end of the corridor.

In the 17th Century Dutch and Flemish Gallery at the end of the corridor. See:

- 16**: a self portrait entitled “Artist in His Studio by Rembrandt Van Rijn” (below)

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

And

- 17** a sculpture by Giambologna, entitled “Rape of the Sabine Woman”(below left)
Examine it carefully. Compare and contrast with Picasso’s depiction of the same event (below right)

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

Exiting the Dutch/Flemish Gallery, turn right and proceed through the first and into the second 18th century European gallery. On the south wall, see **•18:**

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

On the west wall of this same gallery, see **•19:** Pannini, Gallery with pictures of Rome,

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

Proceed west, through the central Evans Wing Gallery displaying European Silver and enter the first of two 19th C. European Galleries. On the right hand (north) wall of the first of these galleries, see:

•**20**: Reginault's "Automedon with the Horses of Achilles".

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

And, on the opposite wall, see •**21**: Manet's "Execution of Maximillian"

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

Continue going west, into the second of the two 19C European Galleries, see, on the north wall

•**22**: *L'Eminence GRISE* (The Gray Eminence) by the French pre-impressionist, J.L. Gerome

Photos removed due to copyright reasons.

This painting deserves particularly careful examination. In the affectively charged momentary encounter between this bookworm in monkscloth and all those courtiers, some might see relations between "church" and "state, some, in looking at it, profess to be able to see the interplay illustrated here as involving tensions between "meaning" and "power" in a human social system. ." What do you see? How do postures and gestures and facial expressions and groupings contribute to the generally affectively "charged" atmosphere? What (if anything) can you infer from your encounter with the picture regarding the worldviews, valuesystems and lifestyles prevailing in the depicted social situation? What is happening here? Who are these people? The storylike imagery is classically romantic! Can you find anyone in this picture with whom you can more or less readily identify yourself? Choose a perspective from which to "read" the story that the artist is telling you. "What is the story?". How much of what you come up with is of your own invention? How much is "completely clear" in the artist's depiction? How are we mentally able to "relate" to such imagery? What is quality in the relationship between objects and observers' "eyes". In the absence of a more apt way of putting it we force visual and spatial metaphors into service in an ultimately vain effort verbally to express some sense of what we have when we have an understanding of something (whatever the matter may be).

Exit the gallery containing the "Eminence Grise" and turn left in the corridor. Along the north wall see:

- 23**: Leighton, "Painter's Honeymoon" (below left) and
- 24** Couture, "A Widow" (below right)

Photos removed due to copyright reasons.

The westernmost open gallery on this floor of the **EVANS WING** contains Impressionist and other 20th C paintings

C. IMPRESSIONISTS AND POST-IMPRESSIONISTS.

This gallery contains many famous, and highly popular late 19th century works. In many academic, artistic, and social circles, an awareness is growing of the extent to which perception is an actively "projective" process in which what is perceived cannot be psychologically disentangled from the point of view of the observer/perceiver. In this sense, every act of observation is inevitably "biased" by virtue of its relation to the observer's perspective. And, of course, perspectives (points of view) do not arise or exist in a vacuum; rather, they arise out of and are systematically related to other aspects of personal mental life and behavior (which are in turn influenced by prevailing worldviews, valuesystems and lifestyles.

View •**25**: In this "monumental and enigmatic" painting in which PAUL GAUGIN (French; 1848-1903): moodily addresses "life's key questions." D'OU VENONS NOUS? -- QUE SOMMES-NOUS? -- OU ALLONS NOUS?, 1897

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

Notoriously, Gaugin painted it in Tahiti in one frantic month, regarded it as his masterpiece and signaled his intention that

it be taken as his artistic last testament by making an unsuccessful suicide attempt immediately after its completion. Here is a consummately romantic work. Perhaps these unhappy circumstances help to explain why so many viewers who really "love" it would readily admit that it is anything but a "pretty" or "pleasant" picture. Quite the reverse, refusing to be "pretty" this work nonetheless draws us in with unspeakable feeling; does so powerfully; and leaves the questions unanswered. Precisely because these are the abiding unanswered and unanswerable questions about human nature, human origins and human destiny, people keep asking them. It is particularly so -- the historical record suggests -- in especially what appear to be perilously uncertain times like these.

You simply don't have time on this visit to examine everything in this wonderful collection. Most are paintings in oil on canvas and include world-class works by Van Gogh, Monet, Degas, Cassat, Renior, Pissarro, and Cezanne. How do the works in this room *affect* you?

The way we approach (and do not approach) the task of framing and asking such questions will go a long way toward determining the nature and scope of the answer(s) we come up with. Ultimately, we will find that our perceptions of artworks (like our perceptions of everything else) are part of the ongoing process that is continuously shaping our overall mental life and behavior (including our hard won and fondly held, personal and social worldviews, valuesystems and lifestyles). Feel free to reflect at some length on the meaning to you of these key questions (as you view the painting, and again, later on.)

However, in this gallery, do not miss this longtime romantic favorite: **•26:** PIERRE AUGUSTE RENIOR (1841-1919)
Dance at Bougaville

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

PART 3B AN OVERVIEW OF AMERICAN ART

Allow about 30 minutes (Roughly 8:30-9:00 p.m.)

Return to the center of the EVANS WING and descend the CENTRAL STAIRWAY to the FIRST FLOOR. All of the American galleries in the east portion of the Evans Wing are closed. Some of the works normally on display here have been temporarily moved into the West part of the Evans wing. Thus, in the Lee Gallery you will find a number of colonial portraits and some other early American works by **Thomas Singleton Copley (1738-1815)** and his Contemporaries. See, especially,

•**27**: Copley's *Watson and the Shark* (1778)

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

Exit the Colonial Arts Gallery, cross the corridor and enter the 19th C. American Gallery. Here is normally to be found a perennial 9.68 favorite: Sadly not now on display: The work is THE EXPULSION FROM THE GARDEN OF EDEN, by Thomas Cole (see below)

Photos removed due to copyright reasons.

Note that the genre of painting to which this work belongs is technically referred to as "Classical Romanticism". This involves the utilization of a "romantic" style to depict a "classical" subject matter. Here a highly symbolic biblical incident of great scriptural significance is depicted in a prototypically romantic -- visually exciting -- way. Is there anything about this finely detailed, dark/bright, high-contrast, almost photographically exaggerated, naturalistic and spiritualistic classical/romantic work that really "grabs" you? If not, why not? If so, what is it, and why?

Return to the corridor; walk west past the EVANS WING STAIRWAY and enter the first open gallery on your RIGHT: here you will find works representative of the “aesthetic movement” that preceded impressionism. As well as some impressionist masterpieces.

•**28**: Much of this 19C. American gallery is currently devoted to the work of John Singer Sargent and his contemporaries. Perhaps his most famous large painting – **The Daughters of Edward D. Boit** is here on display, together with the two massive vases depicted in the painting. See also nearby works by Cassatt, Hassam and others

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

Had all of the presently closed galleries on the first floor been open, it would by now have struck you quite powerfully that the path you have been following westward, through the **FIRST FLOOR** of the **EVANS WING**, has taken you roughly through the history of American art from revolutionary times and the founding of the new republic until around the end of the last century.

Return to the **CENTRAL CORRIDOR AND TURN RIGHT**. Traverse the **HEMICYCLE GALLERY** and reenter the **Scharf Visitors Center**. Prior to its recent reconstruction, this was called the **LANE GALLERY** and it contained many noteworthy **MID 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN** works representing the **“AMERICAN SCHOOLS” of POST-IMPRESSIONISM and MODERNISM**, Including works by Georgia O’Keeffe (one of whose paintings of a Cala Lilly is depicted on the right

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

While you are in the Scharf Visitors Center, decide which of the two exhibits listed here as **•29a** and **•29b** you are going to explore.

•29a: is an exhibit of photographs entitled “**Photographic Figures**” and is located in the HERB RITTS and BROWN galleries on the first floor near the entrance to the WEST WING.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

•29b: is entitled “**Splendor and Elegance: European Decorative Arts from the Horace Wood Brock Collection**” it is on display in the TORF GALLERY (also on the First Floor) Both or either are accessible by exiting the Scharf Visitors Center at its southern end and traversing the “LOWER ROTUNDA.

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

Finally: proceed to the WEST WING LOBBY and turn right. The final object in the present set is located at the far north end of the LOWER GALLERIA. It is

- 30:** Josiah McElheny (American, B. 1966) “Endlessly Repeating Twentieth Century Modernism”

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

This concludes **PHASE ONE**. (It should be about 9:00 pm.)

It has been a long and hurried trip, and the museum will begin closing in about 40 minutes. Don't let the Museum bookshop tempt you just yet. There is still a lot of work to do. Next to the previous work is a stairway where you can sit and rest for a bit and collect your thoughts. As you begin to review the events of the last 90 minutes or so, read the instructions for **PHASE TWO**, on the two following pages .

PHASE TWO
“Art washes away the dust of everyday life”⁷

Allow about 45 minutes (Roughly 9:00 to 9:45 p.m.)

Spend a few minutes in silent reflection. What of Quality have you seen and experienced since arriving at the MFA?. Review the path you have taken through time and space. Reflect on what you have been asked to pay attention to, as well as what you've noticed on your own along the way. Think back to the beginning. What stands out? Did you come away particularly excited or depressed (intrigued, happy, pleased, amused, disturbed, annoyed, frustrated, unhappy, sad, angry, etc.) from any of your many brief encounters with any of the periods, mediums, genres, or works that you have come across during the past hour and a half of exploration?

In **PHASE TWO** You will be trying to find (or to return to) something that clearly says (or fails to say) "artistic quality" to you. If you choose, please feel free to work collaboratively with your classmates and group mates from this point onward. But stay focused. You should return to an area or object previously visited, and be prepared to remain there for awhile.

In any case, when you get to where you want to be, continue to spend the time alone. After a while, if you happen to meet up with other classmates who share some of your own affinities and interests and feelings, don't hesitate to talk together about your respective and collective reactions. Try to be both as analytical and as speculative as possible in exchanging ideas with others involved in the same enterprise. Relate your experience to what you have previously seen or already know about your own intellectual, emotional and behavioral inclinations and your artistic or aesthetic or moral values. In other words, once you have settled on a focus, you should feel free (but certainly not compelled) to communicate with any classmates that you happen to encounter exploring the same territory. The point here is to begin focusing on some aspect(s) of your MFA experience which you find intellectually and/or emotionally "affecting" (for better or worse). Focus, if you like, on some particular work or on a historical period, cultural tradition, or genre.

What if anything meaningful to you can you say that someone else might find interesting about your experience? Can you describe some specific aspects of your own background that are related to your attitude (way of regarding) your relationship to the object(s) in question? What do you know that you can say, on the basis of your own Phase One experience? What is good? What is not good? Do you need anyone to tell you these things? (Is there a place for the study of art and art history in the MIT undergraduate curriculum?) What is your view? Do you have an opinion? Are quality experiences to be had at the MFA? Did you have one? What of (high/low) quality did you experience during phase one of our MFA field trip?

Viewers and works of art, like observers and things/objects/events observed, can be defined in "human systems" terms. (What are we talking about here?) Gradually begin thinking and talking together a bit more comprehensively and analytically about some of the reasons why your "viewing" experience has been is being and will continue to be conditioned and constrained by particulars of your own backgrounds and experiences. Feel free to illustrate (sketch) or verbally express, or otherwise show in some way, both how you are affected by the viewing experience (how it affects you; how you relate to it, etc.) and why. Does your encounter with the work in this context evoke memories of childhood? something else? What associations (if any) does the viewing experience engender in you? Are all of your feelings about the work and your relation to it equally strong? or weak? entirely positive? completely negative? Try to describe your attitude toward this encounter with the object(s) in question and with each other in relation thereto. Get more analytical: Can you identify any specific intrinsic elements or parts of your encounter with the work itself that strike you as particularly pertinent in producing your experience of it?

Can you disentangle (1) the part that particulars of your own experience, background, attitudes, etc. play in your engagement with the fieldtrip experience from (2) the influence exerted upon you by the context and the object itself?

Is it possible to situate the *quality* that you perceive?

Can it be localized?

⁷ Text of a message seen on "Sundance Channel"

Is it an attribute of the object?

Is it inherent within it, independent of our perceptions of it?

Or Is it in the proverbial "beholder's eye"?"

Could it alternatively arise out of an irreducibly interactive relationship involving (going on between/among/within) persons-in-contexts (participants/observers) (on the one hand) and the things (objects, events, etc.) observed (on the other)?

Do you regard these as reasonable (intelligible?) questions?

To what extent is the quality of your viewing experience at the MFA conditioned and constrained by your own default assumptions? By your notions of what you are "supposed to be thinking and feeling"?

Note: in order to prepare more effectively for our next class, we need to know by TOMORROW, the exact names and dates and precise locations within the museum of the artworks that you singled out for closer consideration in **PHASE TWO**. **Ideally, you can take a digital photo or two – please, not more than 3 of them – and forward same to us by email**

Photo removed due to copyright reasons.

Study groups are responsible for accounting for the presence of all of their members before we can leave the museum for the return trip.

Please complete the appended reaction forms; they will be collected on the bus during the return trip.

The bus will make intermediate stops on the Boston side of the river for the convenience of those who live there and at the 77 Mass Ave. Entrance for those who live on the west side of campus. A drop-off at East Campus will also be arranged if requested.

We also want you to give us your overall impressions of the three hours that you spent this evening "searching for quality." Hence, in preparation for for next class: (ideally, before the next meeting of your study group) write a 1-2 page reaction paper on "The quality of my MFA fieldtrip experience."

As already noted: you have only about 45 minutes in which to complete **PHASE TWO**. At around 9:40 pm the guards will begin indicating that "the museum is closing." Check your watch. You probably still have a few minutes remaining, and you may be able to linger a bit longer, but make sure that you have made your way back to the **Visitors Center and thence back to the Fenway Entrance** and the bus by 9:50PM. The bus will leave promptly at 9:55 p.m. for the return trip to our starting point at MIT.

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences
9.68/09 -Affect: ...-

MFA REACTION FORM

Note: in previous years, we'd have you do this at MFA before leaving: This year, we ask that you complete it as instructed and return it to us before tomorrow midday via email.

YOUR NAME: _____

STUDY GROUP # _____

IDENTIFY ONE OR TWO "QUALITY ENCOUNTERS" Please write clearly. In cases where something is mentioned in the GUIDE, give page number. Otherwise provide information as indicated below.

• **First Item(s)**

• TITLE(S) OF WORK(S) AND DATE(S) OF PRODUCTION

ARTIST – FULL NAME(S) AND BIRTH/DEATH DATES:

LOCATION: (WHERE IS IT EXACTLY? ON WHICH FLOOR? GALLERY? WALL?)

YOUR REACTION:

Do you have a digital photo? If so, please provide us with a copy via email

• **Second Item(s)**

TITLE(S) OF WORK(S) AND DATE(S) OF PRODUCTION

ARTIST NAME(S) AND BIRTH/DEATH DATES:

LOCATION: (WHERE IS IT EXACTLY? ON WHICH FLOOR? GALLERY? WALL?)

YOUR REACTION:

Do you have a digital photo? If so, please provide us with a copy via email..

(Please turn over):

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS and FURTHER REMARKS

THE BEST AND WORST THING(S) ABOUT THE FIELDTRIP EXPERIENCE WERE/WAS

THIS GUIDE WAS

THE BUS RIDE TO THE MFA WAS:

PHASE ONE WAS

PHASE TWO WAS:

THE TRIP BACK TO MIT WAS:

ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS?

* * *