

For Immediate Release

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In Character: A Journal of Everyday Virtues

Explores

Self-Reliance

Inside the Winter 2007 Issue:

Syllabus

The American Virtue—A Reading List: In an ongoing series for *In Character*, George Scialabba offers up the essential classic reads about self-reliance. Among his picks:

- *Mediations* by Marcus Aurelius
- *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*
- “*Self Reliance*” by Ralph Waldo Emerson
- *The Road to Business Success, An Employer’s View of the Labor Question* and *The Gospel of Wealth* by Andrew Carnegie
- *Diana of the Crossroads* by George Meredith
- *Ectotopia* by Ernest Callenbach (p. 16)

Community

Old MacDonald Had a Farmer’s Market: Every culture has its pathologies, and ours is self-reliance. **Bill McKibben** argues that total self-sufficiency is a noble yet misguided ideal. While decreasing happiness, our self-reliance is actually a reliance on cheap fossil fuel and the economy it built. McKibben suggest that we figure out how to stop relying on both oil and ourselves, and instead learn the lesson that we’re built to rely on each other. (p. 24)

Psychology

Do what you Feel—Maybe: Intuition—automatic, effortless, unreasoned thinking—guides our lives, feeding our automatic behaviors and growing from learned expertise. But intuition is also perilous. In realms from sports to business to risk assessment, we now understand how self-reliant intuitions may go before a fall, and why and when we should check our intuitions against the facts. **David G. Meyers** suggests we welcome the creative whispers of the mind—as the beginning of an inquiry, not the end. (p. 30)

Religion

Me, Myself and I: As we enter another potential “Great Awakening” of public religiosity, **Mark Oppenheimer** revisits William James and his thoughts on religious solitude. Although there are times to say Kaddish with a quorum of ten, and times to hear a preacher’s exhortation, there are also times to retreat

from the crowd—when a skeptical, atheistic retreat from observance may be man’s only sane option. (p. 40)

Law

It Takes a City: David Morris examines how better rules and regulations can promote self-reliance. Legislation that marries authority and responsibility can impose the costs and benefits of a decision on the same community, Morris states, in a flexible and pragmatic vision that cuts across all political persuasions. (p. 70)

Travel

The Pleasures of Circulating: Through Dallas and New York, Venice and London, **Willard Spiegelman** ponders the joys of walking for its own sake. (p. 50)

Self-Help

Kung Fu Fighting: Matthew Polly travels from Kansas to Henan, China and its Shaolin Temple, where he develops the alter ego of “Bao Mosi.” Though he studied kung fu to become self-sufficient, he discovered the person he was relied on others for his very sense of self. (p. 79)

Also in this issue:

Readings

From Hillel and the Dalai Lama to Marlene Dietrich and Meryl Streep, **Alana Newhouse** compiles thoughts on self-reliance. (p. 4)

Etymology

We hear “self-reliance” and tend to think “Emerson,” but the phrase has much deeper roots. **Seth Lobis** traces the pre-history of “self-reliance,” from Middle English and *Timon of Athens* through John Stuart Mill and High Dutch hymns, reminding us how narrow and static a dictionary definition can be when a term signifies “everything praiseworthy in the universe.” (p. 12)

About In Character

Cited as “truly nifty, accessible and even at times fun” by the *Chicago Tribune*, *In Character* continues to charm, impress, and astonish as it publishes its eighth issue. Edited by Mark Oppenheimer, it is distributed free to 3,200 of the most influential opinion-makers in the English-speaking world—a politically and professionally diverse group of writers, law professors, members of the clergy, policy wonks, poets, physicists, medical ethicists, bloggers, atheists, bishops, philosophers, statisticians, actors, scientists, economists, historians, business leaders, and journalists. It is also available to the public by paid subscription. For more information, please visit www.incharacter.org.

In Character’s publisher, the John Templeton Foundation, was established in 1987 by international investment manager Sir John Templeton. In the area of the human sciences, the Foundation supports programs, competitions, publications, and research studies that explore a range of virtues and positive human strengths, such as generosity, altruistic love, forgiveness, and gratitude. The Foundation also supports research and education on the benefits of entrepreneurship and the enhancement of individual freedom and free markets.

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