Module 4, opdracht 2. Populaire non-fictie

**Aanvullende instructie:**

Vertaal één van de volgende teksten.

**THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE**

This is the story of people and the landscapes in which they lived––the actors and the stage––a story created largely without the benefit of a script and pieced together from fragments of disparate evidence brought to light by a formidable range of specialists. It is a narrative set in Eurasia covering some ten thousand years of human endeavour.

If we begin with the proposition that ‘history’ is the result of human action constrained and empowered by environment, then it follows that we need to understand something of the human animal and the imperatives hard-wired into the beast’s genetics, and we need to comprehend the landscape in all its ever-changing variety.

All living matter is governed by two desires: to feed itself and to reproduce its species. Humans share these desires but are more complex beings, differing from all other species in their intense acquisitiveness. This innate desire to acquire manifests itself in two forms: the passion to take ownership of commodities and the need to gather knowledge and information––to know. It is this inquisitiveness that has, over the millennia, drawn humans to explore every ecological niche on earth and to occupy most of them. It is, arguably, the one instinct that separates us from the rest of the animal kingdom.

To want to know what is ‘beyond’ is a natural human response. It must have been one of the prime incentives that drove the Lapita people to explore and settle the Pacific islands in the late second millennium BC, travelling across 6,500 kilometres of open ocean. It also lay behind Greek journeys into the Atlantic so vividly brought to mind by the third-century BC Greek writer Eratosthenes, who described how one could, in theory, sail from Iberia along the parallel to reach India. Strabo, who quoted him, reflected that ‘Those who have tried to circumnavigate the ocean and then turned back say that the voyage beyond the limit reached was prevented not through opposition or any constraint but through destitution and loneliness, the sea nevertheless permitting further passage.’ (Strabo, *Geography* 1.1.8).

How many adventurers set out on the journey and how many returned? This sense of the ever-fascinating ‘beyond’ is brilliantly captured in classical Chinese painting with its successive horizons, each becoming paler with distance, enticing the viewer further into the landscape.

Inquisitiveness leading to travel may satisfy personal curiosity, but in many societies a voyage endowed the adventurer with renown. To return after a long journey with esoteric knowledge or exotic goods set the traveller apart: he held a power that other men did not, and story-telling about distant parts became an art. This was the very stuff of the heroic societies reflected in the works of Homer. When the unknown traveller Telemachus and his entourage arrived at the palace of Nestor, he was accepted, bathed, and fed without question, and only when the rules of hospitality had been observed could Nestor ask: ‘Who are you, sirs? From what part have you sailed over the highways of the sea? Is yours a trading venture; or are you cruising the main on chance, like roving pirates who risk their lives to ruin other people?’ (*Odyssey* 3.67).

Another incentive to travel was to acquire rare raw materials, the ownership of which gave enhanced status, partly for the inherent qualities of the goods and partly because they came from the world ‘beyond’. Mesopotamian societies were passionate about the deep, rich blue of lapis lazuli quarried in the mountains of Afghanistan and the blood-red carnelian from India, while for the Chinese it was the subtle greens of jade from the fringes of the Taklamakan desert and elsewhere that made the stone desirable from the Neolithic period to the present day. Other commodities that feature large in our story include copper, horses, silks, and spices, all of which were rare, difficult to access, and therefore even more desirable. The essence of the matter was brilliantly summed up by the French historian Fernand Braudel when she wrote: ‘So we find that our sea was, from the very dawn of its protohistory, a witness to those imbalances productive of change which would set the rhythm of its entire life’ (*The Mediterranean in the Ancient World* (1998), 58–9). Braudel was writing specifically about the Mediterranean, but he was reflecting on the fact that resources worldwide are very unevenly distributed and their distribution sets up pervading rhythms that can reverberate across time. Recognizing these rhythms, usually characterized under the mundane terms ‘trade’ and ‘exchange’, is a crucial part of the work of an archaeologist.

*Bron: Cunliffe B. (2015). By Steppe, Desert, and Ocean. The Birth of Eurasia. Oxford University Press, UK.*

**WHAT WORKPLACE ASSHOLES DO AND WHY YOU KNOW SO MANY**

Who deserves to be branded as an asshole? Many of us use the term indiscriminately, applying it to anyone who annoys us, gets in our way, or happens to be enjoying greater success than us at the moment. But a precise definition is useful if you want to implement the no asshole rule. It can help you distinguish between those colleagues and customers you simply don’t like from those who deserve the label. It can help you distinguish people who are having a bad day or a bad moment (‘temporary assholes’) from persistently nasty and destructive jerks (‘certified assholes’). And a good definition can help you explain to others why your co-worker, boss, or customer deserves the label – or come to grips with why others say you are an asshole (at least behind your back) and why you might have earned it.

Researchers such as Bennett Tepper who write about psychological abuse in the workplace define it as ‘the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviour, excluding physical contact.’ That definition is useful as far as it goes. But it isn’t detailed enough for understanding what assholes do and their effects on others. An experience I had as a young assistant professor is instructive for understanding how assholes are defined in this little book. When I arrived at Stanford as a twenty-nine-year-old researcher, I was an inexperienced, ineffective, and extremely nervous teacher. I got poor teaching evaluations in my first year on the job, and I deserved them. I worked to become more effective in the classroom and was delighted to win the best-teacher award in my department (by student vote) at the graduation ceremony at the end of my third year at Stanford.

But my delight lasted only minutes. It evaporated when a jealous colleague ran up to me immediately after the graduating students marched out and gave me a big hug. She secretly and expertly extracted every ounce of joy I was experiencing by whispering in my ear in a condescending tone (while sporting a broad smile for public consumption), ‘Well, Bob now that you have satisfied the babies here on campus, perhaps you can settle down and do some real work.’

This painful memory demonstrates the two tests that I use for spotting whether a person is acting like an asshole:

* **Test one:** After talking to the alleged asshole, does the ‘target’ feel oppressed, humiliated, de-energised, or belittled by the person? In particular, does the target feel worse about him or herself?
* **Test two:** Does the alleged asshole aim his or her venom at people who are *less powerful* rather than at those people who are more powerful?

I can assure you that after that interaction with my colleague – which lasted less than a minute – I felt worse about myself. I went from feeling the happiest I’d ever been about my work performance to worrying that my teaching award would be taken as a sign that I wasn’t serious enough about research (the main standard used for evaluating Stanford professors). This episode also demonstrates that although some assholes do their damage through open rage and arrogance, it isn’t always that way. People who loudly insult and belittle their underlings and rivals are easier to catch and discipline. Two-faced backstabbers like my colleague, those who have enough skill and emotional control to save their dirty work for moments when they can’t get caught, are tougher to stop – even though they may do as much damage as a raging maniac.

There are many other actions – sociologists call them interaction moves or simply moves – that assholes use to demean and deflate their victims. I’ve listed twelve common moves, a dirty dozen, to illustrate the range of these subtle and not subtle behaviours used by assholes. I suspect that you can add many more moves that you’ve seen, been subjected to, or done to others. I hear and read about new mean-spirited moves nearly every day. Whether we are talking about personal insults, status slaps (quick moves that bat down social standing and pride), shaming or ‘status degradation’ rituals, ‘jokes’ that are insult delivery systems, or treating people as if they are invisible, these and hundreds of other moves are similar in that they can leave targets feeling attacked and diminished, even if only momentarily. These are the means that assholes use to do their dirty work.

**THE DIRTY DOZEN**

*Common Everyday Actions That Assholes Use*

1. Personal insults
2. Invading one’s ‘personal territory’
3. Uninvited physical contact
4. Threats and intimidation, both verbal and nonverbal
5. ‘Sarcastic jokes’ and ‘teasing’ used as insult delivery systems
6. Withering e-mail flames
7. Status slaps intended to humiliate their victims
8. Public shaming or ‘status degradation’ rituals
9. Rude interruptions
10. Two-faced attacks
11. Dirty looks
12. Treating people as if they are invisible

*Bron: Sutton R. (2010). The No Asshole Rule. Building a Civilised Workplace and Surviving One That Isn’t. Piatkus, London, UK.*