

# THE FELLOWS GUIDE

by

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Develop Insight. Bring Wisdom to the Public.

Our foundation's product is people: deeply insightful people who will bring wisdom to our involvement with the world. We needed it as World War I ended when our benefactor had his epiphany and we need it even more now as we enter the Age of Endarkenment.

Our foundation has endured a century, and accomplished so much, because we differ. Here is what we aren't:

- \* We are not a think tank.
- \* We do not support research.
- \* We take no position on public issues. Our Certificate of Incorporation defines us as "gathering in this and other countries of information with respect to current world affairs, conditions, trends and personalities [and] the dissemination of such information . . . ." We report. We analyze. We do not advocate.
- \* We are not journalists, though some fellows have come from that honored profession and many have gone on to become exceptional scribes.
- \* We are not academics though some fellows have come from academe and many have gone on to distinguished careers in teaching, research and scholarship.
- \* We rise above the maelstrom of current events. We compose our thoughts not for the moment but for the ages--or at least we try.

Write from Olympus.

This demands effort and discipline, and it's harder for some than for others. Not all of our work rises to this level, but it's our ideal.

Bear always in mind that your periodic newsletters and other forms of dissemination are but tools to help you. *You* are the product.

Here are some steps to make our foundation's ideal real for you.

Know your issues.

Clearly identify the issue or issues for which you plan to offer new insights. Come to know the gaps in existing knowledge, in perception and especially in the framing of the issues. If you can't do that you're not ready to proceed, but if you do it well, you'll realize when you stumble onto something new and unexpected, as fellows often do, suggesting movement into a new area

and new insights.

## Seek the Bigger Questions, the Greater Context.

Always seek out the bigger questions and the greater context of an issue. Think big, think in terms of history, think for the long term and think about the assumptions that stabilize or immobilize your object of study. Suppose parameters were turned into variables . . . . This is the difference from pedestrian analysis. Providing context in this way may well entail significant study.

A negative example from the *New York Times* on a slow-news day

<<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/20/technology/coronavirus-broadband-discounts.html>>

recounts only the ordinary difficulties that everyone faces, rich and poor: you wait on hold for hours; companies respond slowly; documentation is poor; mistakes are made; things are unexpectedly hard if one doesn't speak the host country's language. The *Times* is a *newspaper*. That those at the bottom are everywhere disadvantaged is *not news*. Pedestrian journalism like this pushed the writer's personal agenda on the reader, while offering no historical or comparative perspective, no new insights, and no appreciation of issues amenable to policy or programs. Avoid this style like the plague.

## The Paradox of Engaging With Great Empathy While Avoiding Emotional Involvement

Keep yourself out of your work. No matter how noble a doctor's motives or how ignoble a patient's behavior, the doctor never judges the patient. Nor do we.

This is more than an archaism: it's necessary for the success of your fellowship and for the stature of our foundation in the world. Careful studies have shown that strong emotional involvement distorts perception, blocking the empathy needed to understand interview subjects (for example). It reduces trust in the veracity or insightfulness of the observer's reports. And it may repel readers who do not share a writer's values or who believe that emotional charge ill befits an objective observer. It's also scientifically known that persistent anger or outrage injures one's health, so it's bad for the writer as well.

For example a former fellow conducted interviews producing revelatory work on nativist political developments in Europe. The resulting article was informative but lacked context and missed an important story because the fellow violated these principles. This fellow clearly stated a prior agenda ("make sure this ideology would never appear acceptable") and used inflammatory words to describe the interview subject: "racist" with a "hateful ideology." The interview subject might actually have been a nativist or nationalist, but we never found out because the fellow's mental blinders blocked a deep under-standing of the interview subject's thinking.

As a snapshot such an interview gave valuable details but lacked historical context to expand our understanding of what was really happening. For example parts of Europe were once pieces of the multi-cultural Austro-Hungarian Empire, whose 1918 collapse from its inner tensions gradually gave way to a new mode of thinking, "self-determination of nations," championed by Woodrow Wilson and endorsed as a basic human right in the Charter of the League of Nations, in the Atlantic Charter and in the United Nations Charter. But in recent years a new variant of

multi-culturalism has come along under the pressure of economics and forced migrations, contesting with the former internationally approved "national identity" norm. In the long slow march of history 'right' and 'wrong' have reversed in a flash. We can learn more if in such a case a fellow "thinks big." Lacking personal empathy and big thinking a fellow cannot enter the head of an interviewee and communicate his mental processes to us.

## Tranquillity and the Art of Keeping Distance While Getting Close to Your Subjects

Keeping oneself tranquil and out of the picture is often an acquired skill, especially in light of peer pressure to validate the latest and most visible fads and fashions in mass communications. Fellows will gain by working diligently to develop this skill. Those professionally involved in highly troubling or conflictual situations, such as first responders, police, combat forces, judges and clerics, are generally taught techniques for maintaining tranquillity and objectivity in their work and in their reports. They are our exemplars.

Aside from techniques, keeping oneself tranquil and out of the picture also demands inner strength to resist the calls of fad and fashion. By 2019 even the New York *Times* had succumbed, becoming a "progressive" mirror image of Fox News. Such a pronounced tilt usurps the agency of readers, leading to the Gray Lady's frequently-remarked loss of credibility. Now the best insights into America often come from foreign papers such as the *Economist* and the *Financial Times*.

We aim to go one better: write not from London but from Olympus.

## The Insightful Neutral Observer

Present yourself as an insightful observer, not a player, whom *every* reader can accept and learn from. Eschew pejorative or inflammatory language. Observing these disciplines will elevate you above pedestrian discourse and mark you as a responsible source of insight.

Not every effort will achieve these ideals, but each of your productions should aim for these targets in conception, research and final editing. To the extent you do achieve these aims, you will meet the high expectations of our benefactor and of your peers among former fellows--and exceed the expectations of your readers.

With this training in hand, you will be well prepared to enter the world to advance both your considered values and the goals of our foundation.

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"The emotions we feel may shape what we see"  
<<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/04/180411090441.htm>>

"How Anger Impacts Judgment and Decision-Making"  
<[https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/jenniferlerner/files/fuel\\_in\\_the\\_fire\\_how\\_anger\\_impacts\\_judgment\\_and\\_decision\\_making\\_0.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/jenniferlerner/files/fuel_in_the_fire_how_anger_impacts_judgment_and_decision_making_0.pdf)>

How to think big <<https://jamesclear.com/feynman-mental-models>>

"What the Vietnam War and the Buddha Can Teach about Researching, Teaching, and Writing on Controversial Subjects" <<https://worldhistoryconnected.press.uiillinois.edu/10.1/race.html>>

Extensive resources exist online to aid in cognitive restructuring of oneself to become a calm and insightful observer. Here are some examples for judges, first responders and police.

<[http://www.policepsych.com/nature\\_of\\_anger.php](http://www.policepsych.com/nature_of_anger.php)>

<<https://burkgroup.com/2016/10/28/learning-to-be-calm-in-the-face-of-danger-as-a-first-responder/>>

<<https://www.emsworld.com/article/1221591/putting-yoga-first-responders-practice>>

<<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.894.9259&rep=rep1&type=pdf>>

<<https://scholarship.law.uc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1166&context=uclr>>

A few minutes of search-engine effort on such topics as mindfulness, training for clarity of observation and working under stress will locate many more.

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archived as <<http://www.jeffreyrace.com/document/felguid1.pdf>> April 17, 2023