

Why might Jenkinson equate the phrase “Renaissance man” with “the patron saint of generalists”? How have we diminished the value of generalists in our society? Have we lost anything therein?

How do we learn good manners? Why might Europeans consider us barbarians?

What does Jefferson mean when he remarks in the letter to Carrington (p. 94) that “man is the only animal which devours his own kind”?

Have we abdicated our sovereignty to politicians? Evidence?

What has happened to Jefferson’s ideal of family farming? Why?

Do you think that, living today, Jefferson would still conclude, as he does on p. 99, that we are better with no government and plenty of newspapers than with no newspapers and plenty of government? Why?

How many letters did Jefferson write in the year he counted them? How many letters have you written this year? Last year? Does that matter? What pleasures lie in correspondence that may be lost in telephone calls and emails and tweets and other instantaneous media? What privacy?

Do you agree with TJ that “Nature redeems, restores, and reclaims humanity”? If so, how?

What are Jefferson’s principal limitations in outlook? His principal strengths?

Are Franklin’s virtues still our virtues? Is Jefferson’s decalogue worth imitating? Why?

What did you learn from this book that you will carry with you?