



# Mukesh Ambani

• Magnate, government surrogate, 51 • Mumbai



**HE'S MOP-HAIRED,** stoop-shouldered—even his paunch is too small to befit a true satrap. Yet everything else about him is subcontinent-sized. His \$43 billion fortune ranks first in India and fifth in the world. His manufacturing and petrochemical company, Reliance, is the country's biggest firm. He's building a 550-foot skyscraper as his new home. "The scale of his ambitions is nonpareil; it's unprecedented," says a friend and fellow billionaire. Ambani isn't just trying to make money anymore. He's aiming to remake India.

He wants to build a whole new Mumbai opposite the current

one. He is transforming the network by which food gets from India's desperate villages to its towns, cutting out the middlemen who have held peasants in thrall for centuries. He dreams of a manufacturing revolution that would harness thousands of small producers into an efficient network of home factories. Mukesh Ambani is doing the work governments do.

The renaissance of China and India will define the next century. But while China's rise has been driven by the state—those faceless mandarins who decree superhighways, redirect rivers, raze neighborhoods—India's is

fueled by entrepreneurs, Ambani foremost among them. Both countries are unstable powers—if hundreds of millions of their citizens can now afford a refrigerator, twice as many continue to live in poverty. Ambani's grandest schemes hold out the promise of finally changing their world. And in Ambani's hands, these are not idle plans. He built his first factory at age 24. Colleagues who worked on Reliance's refinery at Jamnagar, the world's biggest, marvel at his grasp of detail, even on the most complex projects. Reliance, started by his yarn-merchant father, was once the most feared company in India, controlling ministers, bending rules, and cutting off rivals at the knees—or so competitors whispered. (After his father's death, Mukesh and his brother and fierce rival Anil, the world's sixth richest man, split the company.) Now it's known for building bigger, faster, better than anyone in India.

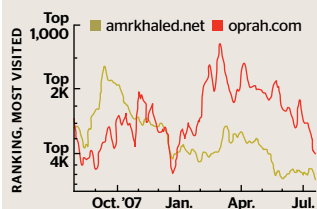
Half a century ago, another unimposing man showed that an individual can alter the course of the unruly subcontinent. Ambani is no Gandhi, but the India he leaves behind could be no less transformed by his prodigious vision.

—NISID HAJARI

# Amr Khaled

• Televangelist, 41 • Cairo

**AMR KHALED,** a former accountant in Egypt with no formal religious certification, has pioneered a new frontier in religion. He's the first Islamic televangelist—with an estimated reach of more than 20 million homes. His message is unapologetically big tent. No rage. No finger-wagging. He has 30,000 Facebook fans. His sermons, which are translated into eight languages on his Web site, emphasize coexistence with the West, the empowerment of women, building civil societies, and the idea of development—economic, educational, physical, professional—through faith. It's conspicuously contemporary and upbeat. Kind of like Oprah, whose Web site is occasionally eclipsed in traffic ranking by amrkhaled.net. Below, a comparison:



Source: Alexa.com.



# Thom Yorke

• Radiohead frontman, music-industry prophet, 39 • Oxford, England

**THE MAGNITUDE OF RADIOHEAD** derives from its rarefied cultural position: It is the only hugely popular arena-rock act that is taken seriously by virtually everyone. As such, the band is the de facto "idea leader" for pop music in general, and every decision it makes is perceived as significant. Everyone expected the old model for album sales to eventually collapse or evolve, but that was mostly theoretical until Radiohead released *In Rainbows* with no specific price tag.

Thom Yorke lives at the vortex of this machine, directing both the trajectory of the music and the shaping of its perception. He is obsessed with the technology that alienates him, skeptical of the media that lion-

izes him, and constantly inventing ways to work as a singer-songwriter on the largest possible scale. His politics are a tad predictable (anti-globalism, pro-environment), but he applies them in unpredictable ways. He's primarily critical of himself, sometimes suggesting that Radiohead will stop touring to reduce its carbon emissions. However, the most fascinating thing about Yorke is simply the reality of his situation. Any new music he makes is guaranteed to be influential, because everyone else will be responding (or reacting) to the baseline he establishes. Yorke is shackled with the unique responsibility of leading the only band that inadvertently matters to everybody. —CHUCK KLOSTERMAN

# Scarlett Johansson

• Actress, 23 • New York

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Because every century needs a bombshell.





## Barack Obama

• Politician, 47

At least in America, or at least in the mythology that attends it, transformational figures are ordinary folks propelled by happy accident. James Madison wanted to be a farmer. Martin Luther King wanted to preach from his father's pulpit. Elvis wanted to make a record for his mother's birthday, and Susan B. Anthony had to go and teach because the family farm went broke. Then history or something like it catches them up, illuminates them with purpose, and forces them to change its course. There was nothing more déclassé in the way we used to think of ourselves than setting out in life to change things. It was the capital blasphemy against the American creed. Greatness is supposed to happen by accident, because someone taps into what we believe is the limitless reservoir that lies beneath the surface of the country we imagine we are.

Of all the things that Barack Obama changed during his campaign for the presidency, this was the one thing he changed that almost nobody noticed until it was too late to stop him. From the moment he crashed onto the national stage in 2004, with a finely crafted speech at the Dem-

ocratic National Convention, Obama deliberately cast himself as a transformational figure. He defined himself, and his improbable rise, as a living witness to the best instincts of the country. He was trying to redefine the country and, in another year or in another time, he might have crashed under the weight of the country's scorn. In fact, that scorn seemed for a long while to be the sum total of the campaign that John McCain ran against him. The Republicans tore up the language looking for ways to call Obama "uppity," trying to transform the notion of a transformational figure—most significantly, a *black* transformational figure—into a campaign liability.

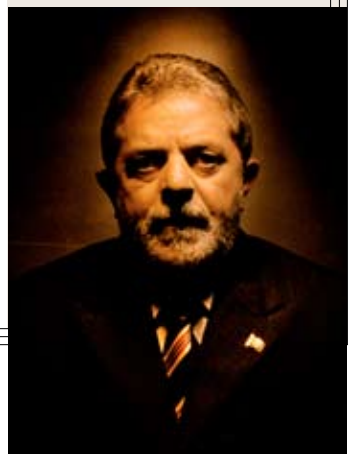
Every politician who's ever run for president gins himself to be the embodiment of the best things America perceives about itself, but Obama was doing so after seven years in which the country, steadily and fearfully, had abandoned in practice all those things it still believed about itself in theory. He was attempting to redefine American Exceptionalism—a concept that has done more good than harm in the world—for a new century in which America has been a lot of things, but exceptional isn't one of them.

—CHARLES P. PIERCE

## Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva

• President of Brazil, 62  
• Brasília

**YOU'D THINK** the United States would be trying harder to embrace Brazil. The world's fifth-largest country has oil—maybe eight billion barrels in a deep-water field discovered last year. It has lots of sugar and lots of sugar-based ethanol (on which we now place a prohibitively heavy tariff, though it is more viable than making ethanol from corn). And it has Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva—or Lula, as he is affectionately known—a soon-to-be-ex-president who, at a relatively youthful 62, is preparing for a portentous postpresidential career. He was swept into office six years ago in a landslide of populism, stoking concerns that he might take his mandate and go the way of Hugo Chávez. Instead, Lula has ruled with pragmatism and a shrewd eye toward building relationships with both the U.S. and emerging economies. His largest social accomplishment in office, *Bolsa Família*—a welfare initiative credited with successes ranging from raising employment to promoting vaccinations—looks to become the focus of his postpresidential career starting in 2011. All indications are that he will use his enduring power and popularity—which remained undimmed by a few scandals involving kickbacks and the like, earning him the nickname the Teflon president—to help guide Brazil toward becoming a major economic power. He is a charismatic, resilient, up-from-poverty leader who reminds us of someone very familiar: Bill Clinton.





## △ Samantha Power

- Journalist, professor, advisor to Obama, 38
- Cambridge, Massachusetts

**RIGHT NOW**, she may be best known for a slip of the tongue. She's the former Obama advisor who called Hillary Clinton a "monster." But that is already fading into a minor embarrassing detail in her bio, along the lines of Jimmy Carter's battle with the rabbit. Power, a journalist and now a professor at Harvard, who won a Pulitzer prize for her 2003 book on America's response to genocide, *A Problem from Hell*, and who helped kickstart the Save Darfur movement, has a vision that will help shape 21st-century American foreign policy. What Norman Podhoretz is to the neocon movement Power is to this as-yet-unnamed force. (Neo-internationalism? Moral interventionism? Machiavellian idealism?) She espouses talks—firm talks—with rogue states, a respect for international law, and a moral and pragmatic duty to intervene—with troops if necessary—in cases of genocide. Of course, if Obama wins the presidency, Power's power will be felt sooner rather than later. For more, see page 250.

# Elon Musk

• Entrepreneur on the grandest scale (cars, alternative energy, space), 37 • California

**E**lon Musk, a cofounder of PayPal, is arguably the most 21st-century entrepreneur on the planet. In addition to running Tesla Motors, the electric-car manufacturer, and SolarCity, which sells and installs solar panels, he is the founder of SpaceX, the only private enterprise currently launching rockets into space. Here, he explains why we need to become a spacefaring species.

The Iraq war, the presidential election, and the debt crisis dominate today's headlines, but will amount to little more than a footnote in the long-term annals of history. To figure out what is truly significant, we need to take the longest possible view. There have only been about a half dozen genuinely important events in the four-billion-year saga of life on Earth: single-celled life, multicelled life, differentiation into plants and animals, movement of animals from water to land, and the advent of mammals and consciousness. The next big moment will be life becoming multiplanetary, an unprecedented adventure that would dramatically enhance the richness and diversity of our collective consciousness. It would also serve as a hedge against the myriad—and growing—threats to our survival. An asteroid or a supervolcano could certainly destroy us, but we also face risks the dinosaurs never saw: An engineered virus, nuclear war, inadvertent creation of a micro black hole, or some as-yet-unknown technology could spell the end of us. Sooner or later, we must expand life beyond our little blue mud ball—or go extinct.

What stands in the way? The ridiculously recalcitrant problem of big, reusable, reliable rockets. Size is fundamental for technical reasons. Only about 1 percent of the liftoff mass of a highly efficient rocket can be accelerated to Mars transfer velocity—it is *hard* to get there. Reliability is important for obvious reasons. Even the safety record for manned missions close to Earth would be unacceptable. And reusability is critical for

economic reasons. Airlines exist because planes are reusable. With the partial exception of the space shuttle, rockets are single-use.

Somehow we have to solve these problems and reduce the cost of human spaceflight by a factor of 100. That's why I started SpaceX. By no means did I think victory was certain. On the contrary, I thought the chances of success were tiny, but that the goal was important enough to try anyway.



We're making progress. If we succeed in recovery and reflight of our Falcon 9 rocket, which carries 11 tons of payload into orbit, it will be the first fully reusable orbital rocket and one of the most significant developments since the dawn of rocketry. At \$35 million to manufacture, it's already four times cheaper than comparable single-use vehicles from Boeing or Lockheed. However, since Falcon 9 costs only \$200,000 to refuel (and reoxidize), an efficient refurbishment and launch operation would allow the production costs to be amortized over many flights. This has the potential to bring the per-launch price down to about \$1 million, a hundredfold improvement over current costs. And if that happens, life will become sustainably multiplanetary in less than a century.



## ▽ Noah Feldman

- Harvard Law professor, scholar of Islam, public intellectual, 38 • Cambridge, Massachusetts

**THERE ARE TWO SIDES** to Noah Feldman. One is the expert on Islamic philosophy and law who was fluent in Hebrew by 15 and Arabic by 18, acquired degrees in Near Eastern languages from Harvard and Islamic thought from Oxford, and lived in Baghdad in 2003, helping to craft an early version of the new Iraqi constitution.

The other is the constitutional-law expert who graduated Yale Law School in 1997, clerked for Supreme Court Justice David Souter, and went on to become

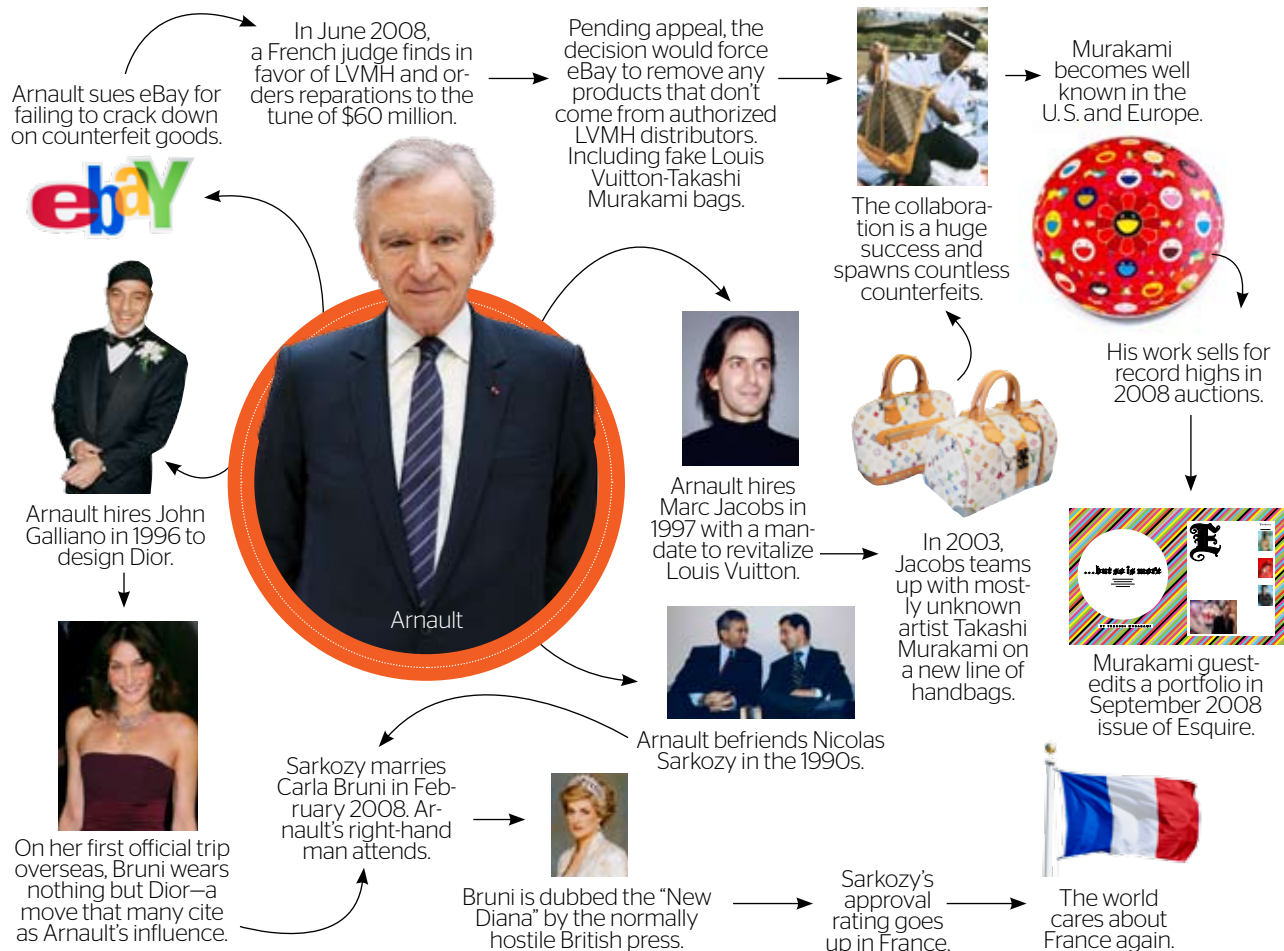
one of the country's most sought-after authorities on the separation of church and state and the Supreme Court.

Put these together and you have a public intellectual for our time. You also have an acclaimed author. (Feldman has written four books and is at work on another about the Supreme Court justices whose decisions shaped the modern Constitution.) And a man whose name has been whispered as a potential Supreme Court nominee himself.

# Bernard Arnault

• Chairman and CEO of LVMH, the alpha and omega of the global luxury industry, 59 • Paris

What happens when the head of Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior, Marc Jacobs, Donna Karan, TAG Heuer, Moët & Chandon, Hennessy, and Belvedere flaps his wings?



## Larry Ellison

• CEO of Oracle Corporation, philanthropist, antiaging crusader, fourth richest man in America, 64  
• Redwood City, California

**AS COFOUNDER** of the third-largest software firm in the world and a leader in the struggle to prolong human life, Ellison is famous for the sheer boldness of his gestures. Here are five:

**Early 1990s:** After a decade of spectacular success, Oracle teeters on bankruptcy. Ellison admits, "I was clearly a completely inexperienced and incompetent CEO," and he brings in new senior management. Oracle is saved.

**1998:** Founds the Ellison Medical Foundation, a nonprofit corporation that funds bleeding-edge research into aging and age-related

diseases. To date, he has given away more than \$200 million.

**2000:** Hires investigators to search through garbage for evidence to support the government's case against Microsoft.

**2001:** Calls for a national identity-card database after the attacks of September 11. Ellison claims he is acting out of patriotism, though the database would be supported by Oracle software.

**2003:** Initiates the biggest hostile takeover in Silicon Valley in more than a decade. After 18 months and an objection by the Justice Department, Ellison wins his bid for PeopleSoft, his biggest competitor.

# Drew Endy

• Creator of synthetic life, 38 • Palo Alto, California

**S**ynthetic biology holds the promise to create life as it could be—grains that cure disease, gourds that grow into shelter, fuel made for pennies from yeast. But right now it's a field that is as unregulated as it is young. Endy, an assistant professor at Stanford, is laying the essential foundation through an open-source collection of BioBrick parts—strands of DNA in standardized shapes that can snap together like Legos—and his upcoming “Parts Fab,” a nonprofit institute that will be one half BioBrick factory, one half open-source library.

Of course, as it becomes easier to engineer a cure for malaria, it will also become easier for someone to create the Ebola virus in his basement. So Endy also advocates for the creation of security measures. When people order DNA, he believes they should have to submit a proposal describing their intent. He also suggests that all artificially designed DNA be “signed” by its designer.

Below, a few promising applications for a synthetic world to come.

**MINE-DETECTING SHRUBS** Scientists are using biotechnology to create plants that will detect the TNT in land mines. Sprinkle the seeds over a minefield and the resulting plants will grow red.

**CARBON-SEQUESTERING TREES** Trees naturally sequester carbon dioxide in their trunks and leaves. But by instructing their cells to convert the CO<sub>2</sub> into solid carbon-based compounds that would grow like an orange and fall off, we could greatly increase their efficiency.

**GOURD HOUSES** By writing DNA that controls cells' spatial patterns, scientists might be able to engineer gourds that would grow into custom furniture or even houses.

**LUMINESCENT GRASS** By inserting the enzyme that causes fireflies to light up into grass-seed cells, biologists could create custom glow-in-the-dark lawns.



# Larry Page and Sergey Brin

• Cofounders, Google, 35 and 35  
• Mountain View, California

**DON'T FORGET** that they're scientists.

The whole thing began as an experiment. A grad-school project. Was it possible to catalog the entire Web, with its daunting tangle of links? Yes. Hence, Google.

Google today owns at least a dozen massive server farms, each of which contains thousands of linked computers. This infrastructure, which allows every Google user to search billions of Web pages in hundredths of a second, constitutes the largest reservoir of pure computational power on the planet. Page and Brin will continue to use this reservoir as the platform for developing Google's core search functions, as well as its other commercial services, new and old.

But they will also use it to conduct experiments. Page recently spoke a little about one of the experiments currently being conducted at Google. “My prediction is that when A. I. happens, it's going to [require] a

lot of computation,” he told the American Association for the Advancement of Science last year. “Not so much clever algorithms. Just a lot of computation. If you look at [a human's] programming, your DNA, it's about 600 megabytes, compressed. So it's smaller than any modern operating system. Smaller than Linux or Windows.... So your program algorithms probably aren't that complicated.” Then he added, “We have some people at Google who are trying to build artificial intelligence, and to do it at a large scale.... I don't think it's that far off.”

Page and Brin, businessmen, have built a hugely profitable company that's coming increasingly close to accomplishing its mission of organizing and making accessible the accumulated output of the human mind.

Page and Brin, scientists, may soon spark the emergence of a mind that is not human at all.

—LUKE DITTRICH



# Steve Jobs

• CEO, Apple, 53  
• Cupertino, California

Because he makes Putin look soft. See page 185.

# Hassan Nasrallah

• Leader of Hezbollah, 48 • Lebanon



Most terrorist movements go one of two ways: They either fall apart after the top leaders are captured or killed, or they are successfully drawn into the political process and ultimately assimilated by the ruling political forces. Hezbollah's rise within Lebanon increasingly looks like the latter, except it is Lebanon's splintered political system that is being assimilated into Hezbollah's radical Islamic agenda rather than the other way around. Now in control of close to a dozen ministries and capable of forcing the installation of its preferred president (a feat Hezbollah pulled off this summer), this Shiite militia—backed extensively by Iran—has become Lebanon's de facto ruling party.

Forty-eight-year-old Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's charismatic secretary-general since 1992, is part Yasir Arafat (he earned his stripes as a guerrilla commander fighting Israel's occupation in the 1980s) and part Ayatollah Khomeini (then spent years abroad burnishing his meager religious street cred and honing his skill for mob-igniting fiery sermons). And, oh, part Huey Long, because he has proved that he can deliver services to a desperate people that the government couldn't or wouldn't. Israel long ago decided that it can't live with him (attempting to assassinate him just like his predecessor) but eventually may come to the conclusion—along

with Washington—that it can't live without him.

Nasrallah, who currently holds no public office, wants to rule Lebanon openly, but with Shiites constituting roughly a third of the population, his only route to Supreme Leadership replicates Iran's longstanding strategy of emphasizing a staunchly anti-Israeli/U.S. front. In this quest, Nasrallah has succeeded brilliantly, presiding over both Israel's embarrassing withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 and its failed military effort to reduce Hezbollah's southern state-within-a-state in the summer of 2006, yielding a 34-day war that shell-

shocked Beirut's fragile ruling coalition, not to mention the world.

With Israel staring at two unthinkable long-term scenarios (South African-style apartheid rule over a soon-to-be majority Muslim population in Palestine and a nuclear Iran), the diplomatic race may soon be on to capture Nasrallah's support for the mythical two-state solution in exchange for Western acceptance of Hezbollah's achievement of clear rule in Lebanon. In effect, banking on the notion that Nasrallah is more a power-hungry nationalist than he is Tehran's ideological puppet.

The United States helped turbocharge the Middle East's ongoing Shiite revival by clumsily creating the first modern Arab Shiite-dominated state in post-Saddam Iraq. In a "one man, one vote" world, that means learning to live with the likes—and dislikes—of Hassan Nasrallah.

—THOMAS P. M. BARNETT



## George Clooney

• Actor—smart, shrewd, gracious, ballsy. Hollywood's best case for itself, 47 • Los Angeles

### Charming Behavior Throughout the Ages

**1200 B.C.**

Odysseus wins back the hand of Penelope in an archery contest.

**1812**

Percy Bysshe Shelley writes a poem to his love, Harriet: "Though time may change and years may roll, / Each flow'ret gathered in my heart / It consecrates to thine."

**1936**

Edward the VIII of England abdicates the throne to marry his true love, Wallis Simpson.

**2008**

George Clooney poses for Esquire's art project, "The Cube," for which he asked ten women to dance. For more see page 4.



## Oprah Winfrey

• Media mogul, billionaire, philanthropist, 54 • Chicago

**THANKS BE TO OPRAH: ONE WOMAN'S GIFTS TO HUMANITY** Lured Cormac McCarthy out of his barn; the June 2006 issue of *O, the Oprah Magazine*, the one with Oprah on the cover; no calls from Mom between 4 and 5 in the afternoon (weekdays); Dr. Oz; made us finish *Love in the Time of Cholera*; Jeanne McClursky's 2005 Pontiac G6.