

FRIENDS OF WISDOM

NEWSLETTER

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Friends of Wisdom: Setbacks and Successes

Dear Friends of Wisdom,

How has Friends of Wisdom (FOW) fared during the last year, and what prospects are there for the year to come? Here, to begin with, in quick succession, are a few FOW events from the last year. I then discuss suggestions for 2009.

In March 2008 we had a FOW mini Conference in London. It was lively and enjoyable, and there are plans to have another one in March 2009. One of the decisions of the March meeting was to set up further Conferences. I attempted to do this with two senior academics at the London Institute of Education. At first, all seemed to be going well, but then abruptly, in the autumn, both pulled out, and too few people could commit themselves to such a Conference in the spring of 2009 at University College London to make arranging it viable. However, I do fully intend to go ahead with a FoW Conference at UCL in 2010.

Karl Rogers continues to bring out excellent editions of the Newsletter. This present edition is the fourth. Karl tells me he plans to bring out the Newsletter in future as a quarterly.

Some time in the autumn membership of FOW reached 200. There are now, at the time of writing, 201 members, 108 in the USA, 39 in the UK, 16 in Australia, 7 in Canada, 3 in India, and then ones and twos in nineteen other countries scattered about the world.

In October I emailed FOW suggesting that we ought to adopt two or three



specific projects to concentrate on to act as a spearhead to our general programme to alert the world to the urgent need to transform universities so that they give priority to the pursuit and promotion of wisdom. One such project, I suggested, might be to urge each university to set up an interdisciplinary seminar devoted to discussing global problems and how to solve them. I asked for further suggestions.

Tom Abeles responded by expressing amazement at the idea that all universities were not already devoted to trying to help solve global problems. It would be interesting to know how many universities do, and do not, have a big, interdisciplinary seminar devoted to tackling global problems – devoted to proposing and critically assessing possible *actions* – policies, political programmes, institutional and social innovations. Such a seminar would need

to be central and fundamental to the intellectual life of the university, both influencing and being influenced by work in other, more specialized fields, if wisdom-inquiry is to be implemented. Might FOW attempt to find out how many universities do, and do not, support such a seminar? Perhaps members of FOW who happen to be academics could report on whether their own university supports such a seminar. (My university, University College London, has a big, interdisciplinary seminar, open to everyone at the University, which meets once a month and is devoted to global health.)

Other responses included the following. Brian Cariss suggested that academic authorities might behave in a more decent way towards senior academics and, without wisdom, there is the danger there will be a breakdown in human relationships. Colin Feltham thought not much would be gained from academics taking up global issues “accompanied by polysyllabic terminology and serving the ambitions of career academics”. Wisdom, he reminded us, is as much emotional as intellectual – a point endorsed by Paul Latham. Roger Mourad agreed as well, and went on to complain about the conservatism of scholars, the way in which academics, locked into the professional pursuit of knowledge, ignore human suffering and seek “more funds to carry on business as usual”. Mat Iredale wholeheartedly endorsed Mourad’s point about suffering, and put forward two proposals as to how FOW might begin to help change academia. First, FOW should seek to get its message across to undergraduates; and secondly, it should lobby governments, in particular national and local politicians associated

with education, to bring about a more enlightened kind of academic inquiry. Mohamed Yunus Yasin said we should begin with children. Harvey Sarles said he had been thinking and writing about these issues for some 15 years, and sent, as an attachment, a paper of his called “Vision: The Idea of a University in the Present Age” which he hoped would help. Rafe Champion remarked that Jacques Barzun is one of the best and wisest commentators on education, especially in universities.

Larry Kueneman reminded us of the way we cling to tradition and resist change. In 1910 a group of doctors objected to a new edict to wash hands after surgery or delivering a baby on the grounds that it would be the ruination of their practice, but the public saw the good sense of the edict, washed their hands and thereby helped to lengthen life expectancy. A change in the way of life came about which did not threaten tradition: could we not learn from this example? In a second email, Kueneman suggested parents need emotional support to bring up children so as to be capable of acquiring wisdom. In a further email, Yunus reaffirmed his view that we should concentrate on children by pointing out that modern technology has transformed our relationship with nature, making wisdom all the more important and, perhaps, difficult to acquire.

Of these suggestions, Mathew Iredale’s strike me as the most practical for FOW to adopt and implement. I would like to propose that FOW adopts the following three projects for 2009:

1. Inform university students about FOW;

2. Lobby Governments, politicians and journalists about FOW, especially individuals and organizations associated with education, and with science;

3. Find out to what extent individual universities, anywhere in the world, put elements of wisdom-inquiry into practice – as a first step towards getting across the urgent need for wisdom-inquiry.

The first two of these projects are already underway. Mitch Larney has prepared some posters and leaflets about FOW which he presented at a Think Tank for students at his College in January of this year. He tells me it was a great success, and provoked a lot of discussion. Ian Glendinning has been preparing material for a campaign to alert politicians and others about FOW and what it represents. I intend to contribute to this campaign, and I hope others will too.

On the 31st October I received an email from Scott Myers asking me if I had considered setting up a FOW Forum. He went on to say that he would be willing to create and run such a Forum for us. This seemed to me to be a terrific idea. Since then, Scott has done a lot of work in creating the Forum and, at the time of writing, it is all but ready to be launched. It will provide a vehicle for sustained discussion for FOW, and perhaps for others – a record of the discussion being readily accessible. The Forum will also provide the means for a Virtual Conference, which we hope to hold early in 2009.

On a more personal note, a book discussing my work is to be published on the 3rd February. It is called *Science*

and the Pursuit of Wisdom: Studies in the Philosophy of Nicholas Maxwell. It is edited by Leemon McHenry, and is published by ontos verlag, a German publisher. The book opens with a chapter by me, called “How Can Life of Value Best Flourish in the Real World?”, in which I give an outline of my work. Ten scholars then discuss aspects of my work, Alan Nordstrom contributes four sonnets on wisdom, and I reply. Three members of FOW have contributed chapters: Cop Macdonald, Mathew Iredale and Karl Rogers. The book is absurdly expensive, but members of FOW might consider ordering it for libraries.

2009 promises to be a rather important year for the future of humanity. Barack Obama will be president of the USA. He has already made clear that he intends to take serious action in connection with climate change. But he has also indicated that he intends to send more troops to Afghanistan, and intensify the hunt for Al-Qaida. In December of 2009, the UN Summit on climate change takes place to replace the Kyoto agreement, in 2012. I am convinced that if wisdom-inquiry had been in place in universities throughout the world during the last 30 years, so that intellectual priority had been given to problems of living, we would have begun to make the necessary changes to our ways of life to avert the worst of climate change two or three decades ago – instead of, as it is, just beginning now to wake up to the seriousness of the problem. Transforming universities so that they become instruments for humanity to learn how to create a better world – or as good a world as possible – is urgently needed for the future of humanity. Can FOW find a way to get across an

awareness of this urgent need? Can we find a way to link up, in the public mind, urgent global problems on the one hand, and the need to transform our institutions of learning on the other hand?

I see that as the challenge that lies before FOW.

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If anyone is interested in helping to develop the FOW Forums and Virtual Conference then please contact
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SPECIAL ESSAY:

A Vision: The Idea of a University in the Present Age

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The vision: when I speak and think of the university, I have in mind the largest institution, the greatest number of students at all levels, professional as much as academic; graduate and postgraduate, as well as undergraduate. The curriculum is at its maximum: some 165 subjects in which one can garner a PhD. I have in mind, then, the largest public research universities, especially those which (also) educate their students to serve their states in the tradition of Land Grant: agriculture and the mechanical arts.

While there are ample reasons to describe a private (research) university of fame or privilege as the descriptor of *the* university – say, the tops of the pyramid of American universities, an Oxbridge or a Berlin – I think it important for our understanding of the present toward the future to consider the university serving the interests of the widest public or publics. In this setting, I intend to focus on the structure-processes of the institution, but particularly on how the idea of a university will intersect with, even help to define, the nature of the future.



I will therefore use the institution I know best – the University of Minnesota located in that urban cultural oasis of Minneapolis and St Paul (the Twin Cities) – as example and metaphor. I will propose a new vision in the development of a truly *important* University of Minnesota: *The Study of the Present Age* (Kierkegaard, 1940).

Whether this vision might apply to privately endowed universities – we shall see. Whether more than one university will survive? – this we shall also see. Whether Minnesota is metaphor or reality? – time will tell. We all find ourselves afloat in a sea of market-driven forces in this moment of hype and reality of a Phoenix University and the newly announced Harcourt University where the idea of a university is constructed as *new products* for whatever its markets will turn out to be. I oppose the idea that the market alone will determine the nature of the university.

This vision is simple in its statement. The present University of Minnesota will expand to include and center itself about the Study of the Present Age. A number of Centers will be created which will literally study, discuss, publish in the contexts of the most important issues of these times. Minnesota will be *the*

place where the changing and continuing world is studied, criticized, shaped.

Primary will be the Center of the Study of Science and Technology as they are developing and changing the very ways in which we operate and think about being: new products, new ideas, even moving our ideas of reality from the world or from texts to whatever *virtual* will mean. Other Centers will include the Study of a Sustainable World; Life in the World's Cities; the Changing Nature of Work; Curing and Teaching; Globalization; the Crisis in Meaning; Ageing and Sageing; Integrative Studies. There may be other suggestions.

There will be a Provost or Vice-President who leads this Center for the Study of the Present Age; and there will be an intellectual leader or coordinator as well. All the present faculty of the university will be included within it for perhaps 10–20 percent of their time; to join it at different points, and for varying lengths of time.

The curriculum of the university as it exists at present – especially in the Liberal Arts and Sciences – will (thus) be preserved. The undergraduate students will be educated broadly in the Liberal Arts and Sciences. But they will also be educated to be able to join in discussions in various of the Centers for the Study of the Present Age, at a high critical and intellectual level. To enable this, I propose a pedagogical-dialogic interactive approach to critical thinking.

Centering the university round the Center for the Study of the Present Age, the central and current ideas and disciplines of the university will be preserved, *essentially*. Otherwise the

idea of a university will drift with the winds and currents of monies, politics and, possibly, religion: the worries of permeability of integrity and academic freedom so carefully pondered by Hofstadter and Metzger (1955).

Our students – or, as they now say, *products* – will be quite *capable* in the context of (what I call) an *unscripted time*, as they will be broadly educated, with an emphasis on critical and creative thinking; able to think-out the world as it happens, and to perform within it at fairly advanced levels. Otherwise, the temptation in a time of great change is to derogate the history of the idea of the university, and to train rather than to educate students for a changing and clamoring market. The Study of the Present Age can both preserve the sense of the larger curriculum and provide for futurity and, to the extent that we develop an *important* University of Minnesota, it will also do much to shape that futurity.

I think that the Idea of a University in the Present Age likely will occur in an urban context, which can accommodate and attract the kinds of enterprises and businesses which these Centers will spawn; more than, say, Amherst, Madison, or Ithaca.

The moment seems ripe for the development of this vision. There is a large pool of older faculty-thinkers-wise-persons from around the world who could contribute to such an idea: many of the more creative minds have been forced to be quite narrow in their work, and would welcome the challenges of broad and critical thinking. Many of them have fairly nice pensions, would require less compensation, and could

contract to develop, lead, and contribute to such a global enterprise. They also would be attracted to a cultural center such as the Twin Cities. Many of them could also attract funding and followings in the context of an *important* University of Minnesota.

Similarly, a number of commercial enterprises would find it important to partake in these critical discussions with us. As we will attract many of the best critics, say, of biotechnology and virtual reality, so various businesses will find it most advantageous to discuss developing and changing issues in the areas of our Centers' concentrations; more reasons to be located in an urban setting.

Early *Brief Courses* could be presented to entering students: An Introduction to the University; Culture and Technology; a Brief Course on America in company with entering International Students (a speciality of mine). Education would be directly, perhaps primarily, toward the students being able to enter into discussion in the various Centers at a thoughtful level. As the Centers both reflect and intersect the changing world, the criterion of students entering the conversations would be a good measure of educational quality and utility, enhancing their ability to enter the world as educated and critically thoughtful persons.

The University of Minnesota is sufficiently large to accommodate the Study of the Present Age, and is quite possibly geared for a large change as it seems to find itself at a moment of declining resources and reputation, a sense that the future is also likely to decline from a formerly great university, to a pretty good one, to . . .

So: the vision!

Context and Setting: Gradual Changes Since the 1950s

As the world is enmeshed in torrents of change, the very idea of the university is also much in flux. Newman's 'winds from the North' (Newman, 1976) – from industrial England of last century – invade both our thinking and the funding of the institutions which until fairly recently seemed somewhat removed from the currents of ordinary life: the Ivory Tower now overgrown with weeds, hanging vines; exposed to the elements.

But it is not only money which offers – or threatens – to alter the university. There is a much larger set of changes which challenge the very idea of a university as it has endured with some centrality and continuity of purpose from Plato's Academy to these times. I am thus cautious about the ideas of the university which we all bring to this discussion. Some of these changes have occurred fairly gradually, if profoundly. As example, I take it for granted that the university is primarily its faculties and curricula. But most people seem to locate the idea of the university in its organization or administration. And many of the changes of the past generation seem to remain outside our thinking as they characterize the university as most of us have actually experienced it. Which/whose idea of the university are we attempting to preserve or reinvent?

So this section will be a brief analysis of changes that have already occurred by the time most of us got to experience the university.

The very nature of work is undergoing a change as great as the Industrial Revolution and the technological developments of last century. The rising power of the sciences and engineering – more recently biology – the decline of the liberal arts, as well as the sense of the importance of a university degree in order to find mostly monetary success in the working world . . . all this has backgrounded ideas of a good, contemplative, educated life, or of the education of the good citizen (almost gone from the modern secular university). Perhaps this is driven much by the fading of the very idea of the nation-state with vast sums of money passing across the world each day (Readings, 1996).

In the context of work and education, numbers of students who attend the university increased radically during the moment of the maturing baby boomers in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Minnesota, for example, increased its student population from about 17,000 to 35,000 in just four years: 1958–62. The idea of leadership of the university was radically altered in that moment of necessity in managing multitudes.

Federal and foundation funds increased after World War II, but especially after Sputnik in 1957, paralleling and driving the vast increases in attendance. Any community of scholars as it may have existed prior to that moment in Newman's sense (Newman, 1953), splintered into those areas where there was external funding and those which had none. The Institute of Technology at the Minnesota literally stole the hard sciences from Science and Liberal Arts (SLA) in the late 1950s, and biology went its own ways to affiliate with

medicine or agriculture. The two-culture split between sciences and humanities, noted by C.P. Snow already by 1959 (Snow, 1964), persists. Faculties went their own ways. The only common interest or issue, already by 1963, was that of finding parking (Kerr, 1963).

In the 1960s, the rise of grantsmanship further splintered the faculty into individuated entrepreneurs, as careerism gradually replaced vocationalism.

And, in the early 1970s, when the expanded and newly created institutions slowed down their expansions, administration consolidated its hold on the university. I think it was during this period that the structural idea of departments overtook the more conceptual notion of disciplines. Whereas disciplines developed and largely remain the outcome of particular questions, problems, or issues, *departments* are collectivities whose identity has become largely bureaucratic; places to house faculty whose power and importance are directly related to the size of its budget, more than to any intellectual import of its disciplined-thinking.

Whenever – perhaps especially now – that the society (government, foundations, especially corporations) wants new or other questions addressed, the department has often been found to be intransigent and closed-in. The obvious solution has been to direct research across or among multi-disciplines. But the actuality of multi or interdisciplinary work often disregards or loses the centrality of disciplined thinking, as it often directs itself to externally generated problematics. Current pressures on the idea of a

university, then, seem to be largely *integrative*; trying to construct an administrative soul for a very loose collectivity in which department backgrounds discipline.

While much of this seems obvious and productive, there is often a loss of history and reason for differently disciplined thinking, at least some of which seems to be at the heart of the Liberal Arts. The question of the future of the university surely involves questions of the importance or integrity of disciplined thinking across a vast curriculum. As example, much of botany and zoology have literally been replaced or overtaken by microbiology, the biology of the cell; a form of chemistry which is certainly both important and yielding of monies. But many important questions about humanity and life have simply disappeared, unasked: morphology, taxonomy. Geography, physiology, linguistics seem about to fade, as well.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the very nature of administration changed in what Bruce Wilshire characterizes as the 'moral collapse of the university' when administrators began reading paper more than judging the quality of their faculties, or asking questions about the meaning of the university (Wilshire, 1990).

During this time, there was also a *democratization* of the university: first, ethnic Europeans (primarily male Catholics and Jews), then (mostly white, younger) women, and not so many persons of color. While this was a wonderful and democratizing occurrence, I think that these events took notice away from the administrative and

bureaucratic changes that were also occurring. One result was that there has been very little criticism of the idea of the university during this period. Another has been the training of most administrators to think of the university as effectively without much sense of purpose: to judge one's own institution with respect to others, more than with respect to some idea of what a university ought to be and do.

Another aspect of the democratization was the vast increase in the numbers of students who came to the university, also contributing to its bureaucratization. The notion of a credential gradually began to replace the idea of an education (Kerr, 1991). A degree – any degree – replaced most deeper questions of the meaning of an education. As a result, the institution became increasingly opaque to the multitudes of students (parents and community, too) as the faculty gradually disappeared into their productive modes.

The sense of isolation in universities increased markedly for students – perhaps more particularly for faculty. Visibility and image – as in the media – overtook the harder work of personal judgment. University presidents began to look at other places a bit better – a bit worse(r) – to see where their institutions (and careers) were situated (Cohen and March, 1974). This set up and continues to confirm the current pyramid of universities in which reputation largely determines quality, while actual work is done for like-minded colleagues in other places. Little occurs in one's home department or university of any institutional value. Visibility and celebrity have overtaken authority.

One could go on.

Related is the rise of the knowledge society in which our Colleges of Education see information, access, and use of knowledge as keys to a good education. Teachers who might purvey wisdom have become managers and facilitators as the importance of education as a profession has dwindled. Dewey's School of Education at the University of Chicago was phased out just recently – placing an apostrophe on an era when we might have had a dialogical interchange with a sage. This is to say that information and knowledge have overtaken education as wisdom has faded from our ideas of the course of a long life: something about the *technologicalization* and *bureaucratization* of life.

All this analysis affirms that the current wonderings about the future of knowledge and the university are set within an institution which hasn't thought too much about questions of its meaning since at least the early 1970s. My concern is that we are asking questions about futurity within a model of the university and knowledge that has been running as much on inertia as substance for quite a while.

The Recent Past

None of this analysis of the depth of change should be understood as a downgrading of any current sense of crisis and sudden change that have been occurring within the university. To return briefly to the vision of *the Present Age*, it is the pace and directions of change which have moved me to suggest that the central function of the important University of Minnesota will be to study seriously the changing nature of these times.

Where to begin? . . . a *crisis in meaning* (Sarles, 2001). This crisis – first noted by Nietzsche over a century ago as the rise in 'European nihilism' (Nietzsche, 1968) – has deepened. Television is a prime suspect in which *authority* has been replaced by *celebrity*. The pursuit of truth, and that faculty and universities can certify it as such, has weakened considerably. Techniques of revisionism such as *spin* and *PR* are by now so common as to be cliché. If you have heard of our Governor Jesse Ventura, you know what I'm saying. A much longer story, but central to our concerns.

Here the Internet and email have opened up opportunities for us to communicate easily and rapidly. The organization of the 'Re-Organizing Knowledge' conference was a direct case-in-point: no paper necessary.

The downside is that questions of truth and authority become more in flux. Truth, logic, reality . . . Whew!

The idea that the world is politics – and nothing else – also seems increasingly attractive, and awaits (new?) theories of global governance, whenever an apparently insatiable capitalism must eventually(?) overstep itself. This, too, is a developing current of postmodernism, in which most left-leaning neo-neo-Marxists are searching against, but also for, new directions. Within the context of the meaning of the university, however, the notion that all is politics tends to be undermining.

As I teach the Sciences and the Humanities course at Minnesota, and as I have that on my mind: whatever 'postmodernism' may mean or convey, the rifts between science and humanities

have deepened a good deal. I characterize the differences being between the *World-as-Text* and the *Text-as-World*. As technology continues to rise with amazing power, science is backgrounded, and the notion of narrative – that all *is talk about*, but any real-reality is located in texts – seems very attractive.

The rise of fundamentalism is related – as such thinkers are actually scholars of religious texts, which they use to determine the ongoing reality: thus, the *Text-as-World*. None of this can be overestimated in its possible powers. The intellectual impact of this is to replace ideas of history and linear development of our being with concepts derived from prophets whose sayings overtake all of thinking (Sarles, 1999).

A University in the Present Age

It hasn't helped that science (thus rationality, and the politics of liberalism and democracy) is increasingly seen as self-serving: scientists working for corporations that fund research at universities more cheaply than they could do it. Isn't everyone for sale? Does it make any difference to us that our food supply is presently about 70 percent shaped by biotechnology – up from 20 percent only five years ago? Aren't our deans all urging us to apply for grants, never mind questions of integrity? Who can judge quality, anyway? And endowed professorships seem fairly open to those who can pay the prevailing price: professorial stars; or ideologues?

Increasing senses of globality have entered our thinking and actualities. Movements of vast sums of money each day and night have helped blur the

conceptual boundaries that we have called nation-states. Bill Readings (1996) wonders poignantly if the Kantian idea of the rational university which would teach the citizen of the rational state is now passé, and its meaning adrift. Where, then, will the idea of a university locate itself?

Relations between structures of economic and social life now rise into contestation, as transnational corporations operate between and around the concept of nationhood and law. This further destabilizes our positioning in the world.

Within the recent rise of cosmology, the sense of our being has diminished radically. After a few centuries of forms of humanism which urged us to center our being upon our lives and our experience, we find ourselves in the vast universes of sci-fi and more blurring of boundaries: in these contexts, between life and death, and the questioning of the meaning of life being determined outside of our very existence. E.T. acts further to unground us.

One more arena of large change in the academy – one which has reflexes of a cycle from the late 19th century. We can note that the amazing concentration upon money as the measure of the quality of life, the developments which drove the 'Re-Organizing Knowledge' conference, also led last century to the kinds of biology, evolutionary psychology, and neurology of determinism, which are in increasing vogue right now: then they called it *eugenics*.

Here again, the temptation to ask questions of meaning of our lives and of

the university, are obscured in the excitement of MRIs (magnetic resonance imagings) and the idea that we are close to finally solving the problem of the human. Evolutionary psychology – by any name – is very similar to the Social Darwinism which accompanied the Gilded Age and Robber Barons of last century. Much of it seems like politics in the name of science, especially if one takes seriously the political applications of eugenic theories in Hitler’s realms. As an increasing portion of our being is being seen as predetermined by our genes, the nature of our actual experience is background and unimportant, or uninteresting . . . or not-psychology or not-biology.

As money replaces meaning, and the game goes to the most competitive, the notion that these aspects of our being are particularly hereditary becomes first interesting, then compelling. Education is directed toward success; success determined by the opportunities and fads of each day. And the idea of a university floats . . . If the experience of early this century parallels the excesses of the current love-affair with money, here at least there is some direction: some form of *retrieve* or *return* to a *progressive pragmatism* along the lines of John Dewey et al. (Hofstadter, 1992: Chapter 7).

What this presages is an increasing concern with experience and doing, replacing the sense that how we got here is more determining than how we live our lives. And we have to re-earn some of the authority which has so diminished in this era of celebrity and consumerism.

Conclusion: The Study of the Present Age

Much of this analysis of the university and the contexts in which it finds itself, our wonderings about the future of knowledge and of the idea of a university, seem to be as much in flux as one can imagine. It is primarily for this reason that my vision of the Study of the Present Age seems like a good path for solution to the future university. In this essay, I’ve taken the position that the idea of a university remains an important one, both in developing and preserving.

I assume, believe, trust, as well, that there must remain some deep sense of integrity to the institution; that we can and must pursue the truth. I don’t mind the polemics or arguments – at least most of them. The splits between the sciences and the humanities, and the curses or cries of joy of postmodernism, rifts like those between the notions of rationality which abound in economics, psychiatry, philosophy, and law, seem to me really interesting. I try to study and discuss them.

Except: they get very little public discussion and less awareness. We have tended to retreat into our protective and protected spaces, rather than explore and confront those who are different from us, or those who disagree with us. The politics of academe are not always pretty. But I think that the differences and depths of disciplined thinking remain very important in the human condition. And I remain somewhat confident that disagreements or passings by can be brokered, understood, sometimes reconciled; but not within the currents of isolation which presently make the university easier to administer.

There are, in fact, several universities within the one that is the University of Minnesota. For example, many of the disciplines promote thinking which depends on case studies and abstracts to generalities later (Law, Medicine, Anthropology, Engineering and in some ways the Humanities often use texts as cases), while others begin abstractly and come to specifics much later (maths, physics, much of biology). In this context, the notion of *theory* is often used as a bludgeon, a bit of politics attempting to raise the import of certain studies, persons, or claims, while the theorists often relegate the case studies to lesser status.

It is similar with those who tend toward the analytic and reductionistic talking past their colleagues who are more holistic. In this context, there are palpable cycles whose patron saint may be likened to Humpty-Dumpty. Here, philosophy is presently seen as coming to an analytic impasse, with a call back to a renewed pragmatism.

We have also been creating institutional distance and disparity between research and teaching, stemming from the 1960s, but continuing.

In our recent attempts to distinguish the university from (apparently) competing private and public colleges, we have been playing games with teaching, making it burden more than joy. In the Center for the Study of the Present Age, students will want to study with the best thinkers, not merely seek the easiest or most convenient credentials I have to think that good management can enable us to get beyond the social definitions of whose teaching, thinking, knowledge is more important, simply by virtue of their

belonging to a field which is currently prestigious. All of this tends toward the bureaucratic, neither attractive nor intelligible. Vast differences in pay scales represent image and visibility and the incursions of markets, and continue to erode the institution. And this has also contributed to the notion that credentials are more important than education. Not! – at an *important* University of Minnesota.

The Study of the Present Age admits-commits to the idea that the world is changing very rapidly and in ways that we cannot fully understand or penetrate in any moment. The Present Age is a concept that may enable us to grasp the present, and to move it toward the futurity of its students (what parents, community, legislator, businesses really desire – they're running scared for their childrens' futures!). In an unscripted world, the university has to become and remain some sort of anchor. It is necessary to be the *important* University of Minnesota, because we have to have (earn and assert) sufficient authority to continue to claim to be persons who profess and pursue truth. It seems OK not to know everything at once . . . if we can show that we possess and continue to pursue the wisdom(s) of this time and of all of time.

The Center for the Study of the Present Age is a concept (soon, we hope, to be a reality) that will study, monitor, critique, and interact with these times. It will engage the entire faculty in a joint enterprise and regain us the sense that we are a community of scholars: in it the distinctions between research-scholarship, teaching, and service will meld into a singular pursuit.

The university must remain open to various communities, inviting them to participate and join us on occasion. Here, I include the global community, perhaps especially those persons of wisdom from the entire world who wish to continue their pursuits in conjoint contexts.

Leadership will be paramount. A central commitment – of the President or Chancellor – is crucial because she or he will have to have sufficient nerve to take Minnesota away from the secure comforts of pyramidal location (a *pretty good* university), and to take or support us as we go our own way. Similarly, parents, students, citizens, legislators will have to swallow deeply as we all have to relocate ourselves globally, then locally. And we have to adjust to the conceptual sense that Internet, email, and virtual reality are us.

We will have to rethink our ideas of ageing, ageing faculty and the ageing of the developed world with some study of the traditions in which teacher-as-sage is the direction and path of a very good life (Peterson, 1999).

All of this will be done with the integrative sense that disciplined thinking can be done within the contexts of particular ideas, problems, and histories. It is paramount that some of us can explore, broker, and explain the nature of knowledge and the broad curriculum with and to one another.

The Study of the Present Age will preserve the idea of a university by entering the world at a level and in senses where we can do what it is important to do, as much in our own terms as possible: call it the pursuit of

wisdom in changing times. We do this by studying and critiquing the world as it is occurring: carefully, well, thoughtfully, continually. We will need constructive criticism from the global community – and hope that they will join us frequently in our deliberations.

In this way, we will also be able to preserve, conserve, continue the Liberal Arts and Sciences as they pursue knowledge in their variously disciplined modes and manners. The curriculum is vast, often competitive, and whether it serves the futures of our students is at much risk in the momentariness of vogues, fads, and ready markets.

I hope that having a Center that pulls everyone together some of the time will enable us to know and to study one another, and to stop much of the splinterings and talkings past that have characterized the bureaucratization of the university in the past few decades.

Careers belong to the ephemeral world and political economies, so we have to reinvent the pursuit of character and of vocation, which will help us to be models for and inspirers of our students. It is we, the thinkers, the teachers, those of us who attempt to be *real professors* who can attempt to *guarantee* or underwrite the sense that students' futures can remain hopeful and doable. It is the Idea of a University in the Present Age which is the vision for this coming reality.

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Spiritual Wealth

Chris Thomson

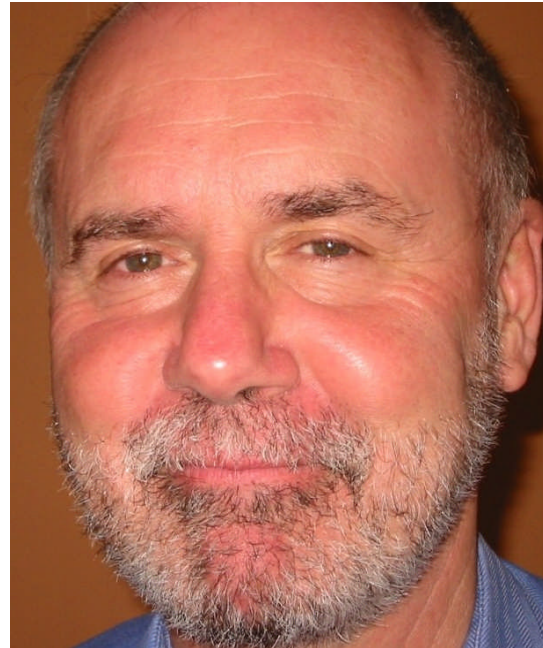
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There is a scene in the movie *Dances with Wolves* where the Lakota are discussing the possibility of white people invading their country. The Lakota were concerned because the whites had a reputation for being dishonest, wantonly violent, with a casual disregard for nature. The tribe's holy man, Kicking Bird, captures the mood of the meeting when he says: "The whites are a poor people, but there are too many of them." When he says "poor", he does not mean they lack money or material things. He means they are *spiritually* poor. And although Kicking Bird knew that the Lakota were skilful warriors, he also knew that the whites often used devious means, modern weapons and superior numbers to win battles.

Of course, that was just a movie. Yet the fact is that devious means, modern weapons and superior numbers were indeed used to overcome the indigenous peoples of North America and take their lands from them. That brought disaster. It is surely no coincidence that when "white" culture overcame them, alcoholism, obesity, addiction, depression, and dishonesty became common among the tribes.

The experience of the North American tribes has a lot to teach us. If Kicking Bird were alive today, he might not be



surprised to learn that alcoholism, obesity, addiction, depression and dishonesty are common in "white" society. Unlike many of us, he would probably attribute this to *spiritual poverty*. And he would probably wonder how the modern world has managed to survive so long without destroying itself and everything it touches. The problems of the world today are uncannily similar to those experienced by the tribes after they were overwhelmed by "white" culture. People today are no different from the original inhabitants of North America. When there is spiritual poverty, they, too, suffer a range of problems. However, since the modern world seems to value the material higher than the spiritual, it tends to assume that many of the big problems of our time have their roots in material poverty, rather than spiritual poverty. While it is true that material deprivation may be the cause of some problems in some communities, it is worth noting that the tribes were at their happiest and healthiest when they were materially

poorer than nearly everyone in the world today. Their problems began only when they were overcome by a culture with very different beliefs and values.

The implications of this are immense, for it suggests that money and material things are unlikely to solve the world's problems. Indeed, there are many who believe that the relentless pursuit of money and things may be a major root cause of our problems, *and that the solutions lie instead in replacing spiritual poverty with spiritual wealth.* This is a complex issue, and it is by no means easy to prescribe a way forward that the majority will accept, but a useful point of departure is to examine the nature of modernity, because it was modernity, in effect, that defeated the tribes and ushered in their problems. Understanding what modernity is and what its roots are may help us to understand the way to spiritual wealth and the way to deeper, sustainable solutions to our problems.

The Nature and Influence of Modernity

There was a time when my home country, Scotland, punched well above her weight in inventiveness. Many of the things that we now take for granted had their origin in Scotland. The list is long and it includes television, refrigerator, microwave ovens, tarred roads, pneumatic tyres, golf, soccer, the steam engine, radar, modern banking, antisepsis, antibiotics, quinine, fax machines, logarithms, and iron bridges. Scotland's inventiveness is fairly well known. However, it is not so well known that much of the intellectual basis for modern society was developed in Scotland, during the Scottish

Enlightenment (roughly 1740-90). Of the personalities involved, Adam Smith and David Hume are perhaps the best known, but there were many others. It is difficult today to appreciate just how influential Scotland was in those days. Scotland's intellectual during that period leadership was so powerful that the French thinker Voltaire was moved to write: "...we look to Scotland for all our ideas of civilisation." Although thinkers from other countries were also involved in the Enlightenment, it is no exaggeration to say that many of the foundations of the modern world were laid in Scotland. Scottish thinkers helped to create what we now call "modernity", namely the ideas, values and beliefs that have shaped the modern world. Few would deny that modernity brought many benefits - market economics, civic society, modern government, modern medicine, modern education and the scientific method. There is no doubt that for a long time these made life better and easier for many millions of people around the world.

However, something has gone very wrong. We have just come through the most destructive century in human history, and the present one has not begun well. As the 21st Century gets under way, wars are raging on three continents, inequality within and between nations continues to increase, mental and emotional illness are epidemic, and nature and the planet are more seriously threatened than ever. There is a growing sense around the world that the current way of doing things – namely modernity – has outlived its usefulness. There is also a sense that all attempts to make modernity work better (politicians call this "modernising") will, at best, make

only temporary dents in our problems. What we have long assumed to be the solution to our problems may turn out to be their main cause. Using modernity to try to solve our problems may be like trying to use petrol to put out a fire. The economics, medicine, science, education and politics ushered in by the Enlightenment served us well for a long time but, in some important respects, they are no longer fit for purpose. This does not mean that we throw the baby out with the bathwater – there are many things about modernity worth keeping – but it does mean engaging in a fundamental exploration of why things are going so wrong. A useful starting point is to go back to the roots of modernity and to explore why it is causing so many problems.

Modernity has its roots in the worldview of modern science. At the heart of this worldview are some apparently harmless beliefs:

The universe and everything in it, ourselves included, is physical

The universe and everything in it is essentially a machine...a very sophisticated machine, but a machine nonetheless.

The universe has no intrinsic meaning

This worldview persists despite profound discoveries in physics and biology that suggest that the universe is anything but a machine, that “chance” may lie only in the eye of the beholder, and that the universe is rich in intrinsic meaning. The classic science worldview has become so powerful and influential that all metaphysical, religious and

philosophical claims that contradict it tend to be rejected. It rules our lives in more ways than we probably realise. If, as science seems to insist, the universe began suddenly for no reason (the so called “Big Bang”) and life on this planet emerged by chance, then the world that science wants us to believe in must be intrinsically meaningless. The fact that this statement, as part of that world, must also be meaningless is little consolation! A life without meaning is a bleak life indeed. For many people today, the search for meaning has become little more than a desperate attempt to solve the seemingly endless problems that we are constantly creating for ourselves. It is as if the modern world consists of two disconnected halves. One half is constantly creating problems (perhaps unwittingly) and the other half is constantly trying to solve them. This is as true for organisations and countries as it is for individuals. Just think how many people are involved these days in “problem-solving” jobs. These include the obvious ones, such as doctors, nurses, police, social workers, therapists, coaches, counsellors, and lawyers, but also the less obvious ones, such as politicians, authors of self-help books, and local and national government workers. The more we think about, the more people appear on this list. A very large number of people in the world today rely for their income and job security on a huge and predictable supply of problems for the foreseeable future. It begs the question of what they would do in a problem-free world. Meanwhile, as things stand, there is nothing like a good crisis or tragedy to give people a much needed sense of meaning and purpose, and it is interesting to reflect on the growing status of the emergency and security

services over the last 20 years. There is little doubt in my mind that one of the consequences of modernity is *loss of deeper meaning*. As we shall see shortly, this is having profound effects throughout the world.

Modernity is also characterised by *loss of wisdom*. If science rejects the accumulated wisdom of the ages in favour of its own empirically derived body of knowledge, then, since science is the dominant form of knowledge today, wisdom is consequently devalued and will no longer inform our lives in the ways that it used to inform the lives of the Lakota. In non-modern societies, people are content simply to know things without feeling that they have to prove them. And they are content to take the advice of their wise elders. The obsession in modern societies with evidence means that we end up having to prove everything, even the blindingly obvious, and we do not have the tradition of wise elders to guide us. We should not be surprised that, with wisdom pushed to the margins of our lives, we have become the most dangerous and destructive form of life on the planet. Nor should we be surprised that older people, who in non-modern societies are respected for their wisdom, have also been pushed to the margins, many of them right out of sight into care homes. A traditional society values the wisdom of its older people and of the group. A modern society produces the cult of the young and the individual. In a traditional society, people wise up. It seems that modern societies have a tendency to dumb down.

If we add loss of deeper meaning and loss of wisdom to a worldview that insists that everything is physical, we

should not be at all surprised that we live in an era of unprecedented *materialism*. Too many of us give high priority to money and material things and low priority to spiritual things, if indeed we ever think about these things. Our economics, our politics, our education, our healthcare and our culture are steeped in material values and in the behaviours that flow from these. We are paying a high price for this, as we exploit each other and the world. It seems that we do not care for things we do not value. It is a short step from materialism to “economism”, which seems to be yet another feature of modernity.

Economism is the tendency to view the world through the lens of economics, and to believe that economic considerations rank higher than other ones. Economism is clearly evident throughout society and is a strong influence in business and political circles. It is surely significant that some politicians refer to countries as “economies” rather than as societies and that, when reporting natural disasters, some news channels mention the value of property damaged before they mention the number of people killed or injured. In non-modern societies economics is a *means* to an end. It is in service to some greater purpose. In contrast, modern societies have made economics the end itself, in the sense that perpetual economic growth seems to be the central purpose of most countries today. This is reflected in the growth ethic of the business world and in the widespread belief that happiness is to be found through money and possessions. If economic growth is the central purpose of the modern world, then we are in deep trouble, because it is a purpose that has

no heart and soul and does not reflect our humanity.

Now, if it is true that wisdom has been devalued and that our fundamental beliefs are basically materialist, then our idea of what constitutes “progress” is bound to reflect this. The main indicator of “progress” in the modern world is economic growth. Not only is this thought to be desirable in itself, it is seen by many as a universal panacea that will eventually cure poverty, disease, unhappiness and many other ills. The reality is that there is nothing intrinsically desirable about economic growth. It simply means that we spent more money this year on goods and services than we spent last year. It does not tell us anything about the desirability or quality of these additional goods and services. It does not tell us anything about the human, social and environmental costs of providing them. It does not tell us anything about income distribution and social justice. Most important of all, it does not tell whether we are getting happier, wiser, and healthier and more fulfilled, which is surely the point of it all. The principal measure of economic growth - GDP - treats the good, the bad and the ugly as if they were all good. So long as money legally changes hands, it counts towards GDP. If there is more crime to be dealt with, more divorces to be processed, more pollution to be cleaned up, more illness to be treated, and more debt being incurred, then all of this counts towards economic growth. In fact, nothing boosts growth more than a war or a natural disaster. GDP gives us the impression that things are going well when they may be going badly, yet most people continue to believe that economic

growth is not only desirable, but indispensable.

But there is more to it this. Far from being a universal panacea, the relentless drive for economic growth on the part of nations, businesses and individuals may turn out to be a universal problem, because it brings with it pressures, values and behaviours that damage people, communities and the planet. For example, there are pressures to work harder and to consume more. That causes stress and illness. There are pressures to exploit and cut corners in the interests of making profit. That causes injustice and corruption. There are pressures to acquire money and possessions illegally, if other means are unavailable. That causes crime. As for the planet, it should be abundantly clear by now that it cannot tolerate these pressures.

None of this is to suggest that the modern world is all bad. Kicking Bird would no doubt agree that it has given us many good things. He liked Kevin Costner’s telescope, for example. However, he would be concerned at the following comparison:

We have more...

Money and things
Speed
Choice
Knowledge
Healthcare
Telecommunications
Goods and services
Entertainment
Police and prisons

We have less...

Happiness and fulfilment
Time
Satisfaction
Wisdom
Real health
Genuine communication
Self-reliance
Culture
Inner security

A Spiritual Vacuum

By marginalising wisdom and removing deeper meaning, modernity has unwittingly created a spiritual vacuum. Many people feel that something big is missing from their lives. They may not be able to put this into words, but they feel an empty space inside them that cries out to be filled. They experience this as anxiety, discomfort, insecurity, despair, or a sense of pointlessness. Understandably, they try to fill the emptiness, and they do this in a huge variety of ways. They eat too much, they shop until they drop, they watch a lot of television or play a lot of video games, they rush around too much (no surprise that being busy is regarded as a virtue today), or they use sex, drugs or alcohol as pain-killers. These behaviours, worrying in themselves, often lead to alcoholism, obesity, addiction, depression and suicide and other symptoms of spiritual poverty. So long as there is a spiritual vacuum, people are likely to continue to behave in these ways.

If modernity is indeed the main root cause of the spiritual poverty that is widespread across the world, what can we do about it? What can we do to reverse the downward drift into even more materialism and further loss of

wisdom and meaning? There is no easy answer to this. However, I do think that it is possible to outline a few of the general conditions that will favour the emergence of spiritual wealth.

Value older people

Older people have been pushed to the margins of modern society, while the young occupy centre stage. Some television programmes, for example, give us the impression that older people have been airbrushed out of existence. And, far from being seen as our main source of wisdom, older people are often portrayed as a burden on society or merely as a market for retirement services. Is it any wonder that so many older people feel unvalued and isolated? In too many instances, it has become a self-fulfilling prophecy that as one gets older, one gets less healthy, more dependent, less valuable and, for all practical purposes, invisible. In some countries people as young as 55 are considered to be “old” and many actually expect to be on regular medication. The fact that so much potential is being lost as older people are marginalised is one of the tragedies of our times. We could, if we wished, enable the emergence of a vast amount of wisdom simply by raising the status of older people and giving them centre stage. That would have a profound effect on all of us.

Bring back true education

There was a time when education was very much about the growth of consciousness and intelligence, because that is what the word “education” implies. In its original sense, education is all about bringing out the best and

uniqueness in each one of us, even if that means we end up questioning prevailing beliefs, values and behaviours. It is about helping us to realise our potential, including our potential to be highly conscious and intelligent. However, although we continue to use the word “education” to describe what happens in schools, colleges and universities, there is not much true education around these days. To a large extent, it has been replaced by its opposite, schooling – which is the process of shaping people to believe and follow prevailing beliefs, values and behaviours. Although there is a lot of talk, by politicians and others, about the importance of education, one is left wondering whether they are talking about a preparation for life or a preparation for work. If “education” is mainly a preparation for work, then we have a serious problem because it means that our schools and universities are producing people with skills and knowledge for working in the global economy, but they are not producing people with wisdom and consciousness for living well in the world. There are, of course, some notable exceptions, but these are the exceptions that prove the rule. The fact is that true education enhances and enables consciousness and intelligence. Schooling seems to restrict them. Insofar as schooling is the prevalent mode of “education” in the modern world, consciousness and intelligence are being restricted on a massive scale. That is a global tragedy. There is an urgent need to bring true education into the world.

Encourage self-reliance

One of the hallmarks of modern societies is their increasing dependency on business, government and experts for

goods, services and knowledge that, in many cases, individuals and communities would be better providing for themselves. As a rule of thumb, dependency is unhealthy and self-reliance is healthy. The Lakota and other tribes were self-reliant, empowered communities. They were living cultures, rather than vicarious cultures. They did things for themselves, rather than having things done for them. They recognised the central importance of basic human capacities, such as caring, growing their own food, cooking, healing, educating, creating, and entertaining, and would not dream of having these things provided as commodities and services by government and big business. Overdependency is spiritually impoverishing. Insofar as modern society is overdependent on business, government and experts for the basics of living, it is “poor in spirit”. One of the ways of enabling spiritual wealth is to encourage as much self-reliance as possible. In practice, this would require a new economics.

Adopt a new economics

Modern economics very clearly ranks money and property higher than people and nature. If you doubt this, then just consider the amount of attention paid to people and places with money and property and the amount paid to those without. This is in complete contrast to the value-systems of the Lakota and other non-modern societies. Their value-systems enabled them to live healthy, dignified lives, in harmony with nature and each other, whereas too many of us live unhealthy, undignified lives, often in conflict with nature and each other. So, why on earth are we so attached to an economics that causes so much

disharmony and conflict? We are attached to it because its myths are powerful, and because these myths are skilfully advocated by government, business, academia and the media. Simply stated, the myths are:

- The market knows best. It should not be interfered with, and it should govern as many aspects of our lives as possible
- Private ownership is more efficient, therefore more desirable, than public ownership
- Capital is a virtue and deserves the lion's share of the rewards. By contrast, labour is a cost and that cost should be kept to a minimum
- The economy must never stop growing. Therefore all of us need to be ever more competitive and work harder and harder. That will never stop
- New technology will enable us to circumvent threats to the environment without having to change our behaviour
- The rising tide will lift all boats. Thus, economic growth will eventually reduce material poverty and inequality and alleviate problems that are assumed to have their roots in material poverty, such as crime and disease

These are the principal myths. The reality is very different from the myths. In reality:

- there is growing inequality within and between nations - the rising tide is lifting the luxury yachts faster than the small boats

- important aspects of our culture are being dumbed down in the interests of creating mass markets - many cherished parts of our lives are being commercialised in the interests of profit
- our value-system encourages and rewards personal ambition and selfishness, so why are we surprised that crime, stress and dishonesty are on the increase?
- the natural environment is more seriously threatened than ever
- to cap it all, we have political and other institutions that tend to put the interests of the economy and business before the interests of society

All of this is *disempowering and dehumanising*. We urgently need to adopt an economics that values people and nature higher than money and property, and that is empowering and humanising.

A Conscious World

I do not deny that modernity has given us a lot, but it came at a price. There are many who believe that the price is now too high and that it is time to bring back meaning, wisdom, ecology and consciousness into our lives and to find ways to go beyond materialism. As we do this, I believe that we shall find that we are simultaneously creating a new kind of economics, a new kind of education, a new kind of healthcare, a new kind of science, and a new kind of politics. It is impossible to predict exactly what they will be, but, if they are imbued with meaning, wisdom, ecology and consciousness, they may look something like this...

The *new economics* will be about enhancing people and planet, rather than exploiting them. At the heart of the new economics will be love, wisdom and ecology. It will bring with it new kinds of relationships, new kinds of businesses, and new kinds of institutions. The new economics does not mean that we will not have things to do. There will always be plenty to do. But it does mean that we will be much less likely to *overdo*!

The *new education* will be about bringing out the best and uniqueness in each individual, rather than schooling them to believe certain things and to behave in certain ways, which is what usually happens today in our schools, colleges and universities. At the heart of the new education will be the development, in children and adults, of wisdom, consciousness, meaning and ecology. Hard as it is to believe today, courses in consciousness will be a central part of the curricula of all schools, colleges and universities

The *new healthcare* will be about self-reliance, wisdom and ecology in health and medicine, rather than about overdependence on experts and technology. Medical treatment will be the exception rather than the rule because the main focus will be on staying healthy. There will be much less need for doctors, drugs and hospitals, partly because fewer people will be getting ill, but also because our knowledge and understanding of the human being will change profoundly as we become more conscious

The *new science* will be about applying the whole of the human being to the

search for knowledge, rather than just the physical part, as at present. Science of the physical will continue to give us much that is useful. However, in the new science, knowledge of the physical will be complemented by knowledge of the non-physical, and that will give us a fuller, richer understanding of the world. The new science will reflect wider, deeper forms of knowing and the additional knowledge that flows from this. It will literally be a “science of the whole” because it will integrate the physical with the non-physical and the material with the spiritual

The *new politics* will be about the return of power to people and communities, rather than having power concentrated in the hands of politicians and the wealthy. At the heart of the new politics are two ideas - the idea that most power stays at the local level, where it belongs, and the idea that everyone has something useful to say and contribute

None of the above will be easy. People will not willingly give up the habits of a lifetime, and many in power will resist tooth and nail. In fact, if we are honest with ourselves, engaging in the kinds of changes I am suggesting here will be the most difficult thing we ever do. Transformation may seem attractive in theory. In practice, it is often messy and painful. Yet if we want to preserve this planet and survive and prosper as a race, we have no choice but to change fundamentally. That may take a generation or three, but we have to start somewhere.

Conclusion

I am acutely aware that I have covered a lot of ground at some speed. My

intention is simply to draw attention to the fact that modernity is no longer a health-producing or happiness-producing culture, if indeed it ever was. It has had the unintended effects of marginalising wisdom and meaning and creating spiritual poverty. If we are ever to solve the many problems of the modern world, then we have to replace spiritual poverty

with spiritual wealth. This means many things, but ultimately it means allowing wisdom and meaning to fill our private and public lives. But wisdom does not come from nowhere. It has to be nurtured and it has to be valued. I can think of no better way of cultivating wisdom than to work on one's consciousness and intelligence.

Proposal to Establish an International Peace Book Prize

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www.lulu.com/iipsgp

PURPOSES:

1. to found a new international peace book award to encourage authors, publishers and libraries to focus on the irenic possibilities inherent in the dissemination of ideas through books;
2. to support the work of visionary authors who work in peace literature;
3. to encourage scholars who explore the details of peace in the various branches of human knowledge;
4. to send a strong signal to the world's reading public that peace matters and that reading is a political act; to support the work of libraries in their ongoing struggle against those who would urge that (expensive) information technology has superseded the printed word;
5. to remind the intelligentsia of the world that in the struggle for enlightenment, the book has always played a key role;
6. to encourage religious thinkers to come together across the planet and to laud the dissemination of wisdom through the power of the



7. to encourage the work of scientists worldwide to develop their ideas, technologies and inventions, and pursue research in direction which advance human understanding, cooperation and peace
8. to give support to educators worldwide who work for peace through education and who often, in troubled condition, have to teach in conditions of great adversity
9. to inspire and empower the creative intelligence of mankind to focus on the ways and means of peace, cooperation and international understanding rather than the ways and means of fear, hatred and mutual destruction

PROTOCOLS:

1. All the national libraries of the world are invited to come together to agree to cooperate on this scheme and to

participate in it (via IIPSGP and UNESCO)

2. Each of the participating national libraries agrees to award an annual prize, nationally, for the best books, in different categories, which can advance understanding of peace, published in their country, in the previous calendar year...

3 Each participating national library appoints a panel of judges from among the senior academics and creative intelligentsia of their country (from those with a track record of intelligent involvement in peace issues)

4. Each participating national library makes a presentation and awards ceremony, with panel of judges present, depending on the country, may be largely symbolic, e.g. a prize of book tokens maybe £1000 (or more depending on sponsors in each country) worth per prize winner, at a special ceremony in their country at the library, televised and given prominence in the media, in which the prize winners also give a formal speech of acceptance – preferably the prize is awarded by the head of state or similar high ranking dignitary

5. Each participating library then sends copies of their prize winner's books to every other cooperating library in the scheme...

6. Each year, therefore, each national library gets a collection of eminent books sent gratis from however many other libraries are involved.

7. The peace collections of each national library are kept in a special open access

location in the main reading room of the respective national libraries, along with appropriate dictionaries

8. Prizes would be both for a) literature, b) non-fiction c) poetry categories, so there would be three awards per country per year

DEVELOPMENT PLAN:

1. This project is a proposal initiated by the International Institute of Peace Studies and Global Philosophy and arises after two decades of work in the humanistic advancement of learning and education for peace
2. IIPSGP invites UNESCO to become involved as the lead organization to take the project forward formally at intergovernmental level, and continues to cooperate with UNESCO on implementing the project
3. National UNESCO ambassadors to approach the national libraries of each member country to explain the scheme and invite participation (IIPSGP to support and facilitate such approaches where appropriate)
4. Other academic institutions and networks, including professional librarian networks, literary societies, authors guilds, invited to participate and get involved in designing and implementing the scheme
5. UNESCO organizes official launch in 2010 in the last year of the UN Decade for Peace and Non-Violence

The End Justifies The Means

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“Darkness at Noon” by Koestler is highly recommended for anyone who is concerned about the greed and instrumental culture that is now almost universal in our Society. This is a greed and instrumental culture which is founded on an almost religious belief in the supremacy of Knowledge. Science and so called hard facts have indeed produced the euphoric materialistic improvement we all expect in our everyday lives. What we did not expect is the sudden and catastrophic collapse of our systems both monetary and human which we are now facing. A collapse threatening the very materialistic triumphs we applaud.

Wisdom lost and lonely in a greedy instrumental world is waiting in the wings protected and nurtured by those like Nicholas Maxwell who have tended it. It could be that we are on the brink of a reawakening of humankind or it could be we are facing the ultimate ruin of our Westernised Society. A question still being asked by those in Friends of Wisdom is:

Can an understanding and an acceptance of Wisdom at this late stage of our Society bring back some sanity to our existence?

Just a little while ago there was a majority of people who could look towards the ‘efficiency’ of our



Westernised production and monetarised marketing machine as highly effective as a means in enabling a materialistic prosperity unheard of before. Suddenly the ‘End’ is looking decidedly broken and in disrepair. When the ‘End’ is brought abruptly into question then the naïve acceptance of the ‘means’ is itself brought into doubt.

The Westernised approach has for decades been based on the instrumentalism and the supremacy of hard cold absolute Knowledge. Huge institutions called Universities have grown like Topsy in the accumulation and worshipful adoration of Knowledge.

During these decades of huge growth of Knowledge the voices of academics like Nicholas Maxwell have been allowed to cry out into a black hole of a wilderness. Wisdom has been sacrificed to the god of instrumental Knowledge. If it cannot be measured it does not exist the Westernised bray of reductionism and so-called hard science has scoffed. Monopoly Education has thwarted attempts to gain wisdom at every step of the way. Wisdom has been not only missing in Education it has been ridiculed.

Will the ‘end’ as we are seeing it unfold continue to justify the ‘means’. Woolworths and company after company are losing the battle to survive. The For Sale boards are

manifold and sadly manifest in every town, village and industrial and commercial estate. Jobs are going by the thousand. People are literally losing their means of livelihood with no wisdom to fall back on as to how to adjust their lives.

Koestler wrote:

“Consider a moment what this humanitarian fog-philosophy would lead to, if we were to take it literally; if we were to stick to the precept that the individual is sacrosanct, and that we must not treat human lives according to the rules of arithmetic.....

The principle that the end justifies the means is and remains the only rule of political ethics.....

There are only two conceptions of human ethics, and they are at opposite poles. One of them is Christian and humane, declares the individual is sacrosanct, and asserts that the rules of arithmetic are not to be applied to human units. The other starts from the basic principle that a collective aim justifies all means, and not only allows, but demands, that the individual should in every way be subordinated and sacrificed to the community.....

Do you know, since the establishment of Christianity as a state religion, a single example of a state which really followed a Christian policy?.....

.....which forces them eternally to defer to another time the putting into practice of humanism.....”

If Koestler was and remains correct then what chances for a society which truly puts the individual first amongst equal with the organisations which are supposed to be there to sustain them?

Charles Handy in *The Age of Unreason* said “We are entering an age of unreason, a time when the future, in so many areas, is to be shaped by us and for us; a time when the only prediction that will hold true is that no prediction will hold true; a time, therefore, for bold imaginings in private life as well as public; for thinking and doing the unreasonable.” This is almost prophetic when you consider what each of us is experiencing at this time.

He wrote that over ten years ago and it has all come true in most places – however until we make the individual sacrosanct they will not have the ability to do the unreasonable and so the most important facet of Handy’s prophesy fails and with it postmodernity sinks beneath hypermodernity?

Martin Seligman – *Authentic Happiness (New Positive Psychology)* says “There is another more profound obstacle: the belief that happiness (and even more generally, any positive human motivation) is inauthentic. I call this pervasive view about human nature, which recurs across many cultures, the rotten-to-the-core dogma.”

Knowledge is hard, cold and neither understands nor accepts any form of emotion. The beautiful human experience of being happy has no association with Knowledge. Love and treating people in a human respectful manner knows no place in the formal construction of our Institutions, Organisations and Companies based on the efficient use of knowledge and money. There are those who are concerned that these vessels of people that make up our Society are themselves made to be rotten-to-the-core because of their non acceptance of

happiness, love and normal human relationship. To take part in normal human relationship requires something more than knowledge.

Achieving normal human relationship does require Wisdom. Without

Wisdom in human relationship there is an inevitability of a Kafkaesque absurdity. This is an absurdity we are dangerously close to experiencing on a universal and omnipresent societal scale.

Personal Reflections:

A Science of Wisdom

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"Wisdom: Good judgment about the evaluation of complex situations and conceptions of a good life in the light of a reflective understanding of the human condition." The Oxford Companion to Philosophy (1995)

Many people today seem to recognize that 'wisdom', however defined, is lacking in our world. But can we put it back? I believe that we can. It will not be easy, it will not follow from the ideas currently held by most of our 'elites', whether political, corporate or bureaucratic. It does require a science rather different than that followed in the past. A science that includes human values. This can be done, and I will outline my attempt at a 'metahuman science' (metascience for short) here.

This work is based upon a new form of science that has arisen over the last 30 years or so. It is still largely unknown. It is called complex systems science, and is loosely based upon the 'systems sciences' that had prevalence (if not much recognition) during the mid 20th Century.

Here we begin to recognize 'wisdom', in that 'answers' need to include all aspects of the systems being considered. In other words, context is all, we can no longer treat 'systems' as isolated, treat 'observers' as detached, but must consider (scientifically) how all these aspects inter-relate, how they affect each other.



Given that we now have computers, which we can use to realistically investigate 'complex systems' (i.e. those with more 'variables' than can be analyzed 'mathematically'), then what can we learn?

Firstly, we find that we cannot have single solutions, the idea that all systems have a 'solution' (i.e. 'a truth') is invalid. There are (typically) many possible solutions (alternatives) all equally valid or 'true'. Choice between them depends upon our 'values' - obviously, if we are diverse humans, then our 'choices' will be different. Diversity is thus necessary and not a problem to be crushed by force, destroying any other possible 'solutions'!

Secondly, we can ask what are our goals or needs ? Why do we live life at all? Obviously we have many values, most of them not related to the mere 'survival' evolutionary biologists fixate upon. Taking these into account is rather central to any evaluation of what we can call 'quality of life' - and without quality, what price mere 'quantity'? We must get a feel for what these values are, what matters to each of us. From my point of view, I

classify such human needs into three levels which I call 'primal', 'social' and 'abstract'. These are groupings that emerge over evolutionary time, becoming more numerous also as we develop as humans.

Thirdly, and more crucially we must consider how all these needs interact, how 'bettering' one value impinges upon the others, especially the needs of the other inhabitants of this planet, i.e. a consideration of nonlinearity, synergy and dysergy, in other words what is 'lost' when we only improve a single value (e.g. profit) - it is often, in practice, far, far more than is ever gained and (because the 'improver' doesn't even look at any of these) these losses are completely hidden from view!

The final learning stage is then that of fitness, how our actions affect our quality of life overall. Do we gain 'profit' at the cost of everything else worthwhile? Here we need to evaluate multidimensional issues, a single 'bottom line' just will not do. Compromise between complex sets of values is a necessary aspect of 'fitness', we cannot maximize just one without losing many other vital ones.

These 4 stages (which I call 'alternatives', 'goals', 'interactions' and 'consequences') comprise what I add to science, and these prove to be compatible with the views of Nick Maxwell and others. But I'd have to go somewhat further. Many of our problems are due to a long outdated logical formalism. Aristotelian beliefs choose to categorize all issues as 'true' or 'false', but that in itself is defective - an half 'apple' is neither a 'true' apple nor a 'false' apple, it is a 'fuzzy' 50% apple. All 'real' world 'objects' are such fuzzy ones! But again we can go further, being an 'apple' is just one

aspect of this object's 'intrinsic' reality - a mere yes/no label. The whole of any 'whole' is far more 'wise' than any single isolated aspect. Yet the whole of everything connected to everything else seems far more 'wise' still. This wider 'wisdom knowledge' I call holarchic valuation - and it is that that I will claim to be the real 'science of wisdom'. It can be applied to our world views and educational systems, and forms a pretty effective critical viewpoint by which to consider many of our destructive world behaviours.

But am I here just bullshitting? Is there any 'evidence' that such a 'science' really exists and can tell us anything new? In a limited overview, I cannot do more than to suggest that it can. Let us look, briefly, at some concepts that we can introduce in bringing the complexity sciences into the 'real world', insights (there are many others) that drive my work.

When we try to look at systems that have many variables, we usually just focus upon one of them. Brains being limited, we can do little else. But computers can deal with much more, and when we analyze such systems dynamically we find results that contradict our naïve 'intuitions'.

Systems that interact (i.e. we include the 'relations' ignored by more reductionist approaches) generate multiple stable states. All these states are perfectly valid 'optima' for the system, i.e. they are not competing in any sense, think maybe of a 'golfer' versus an 'angler'. These 'pareto optimal' solutions can be almost infinite in number, but the 'truth' of 'simple' science ignores these provable effects.

These optima are what we call (in complexity science) 'attractors' and

they can take many forms. Point, Cyclic and Strange (or Chaotic) are those usually highlighted. But complex systems have them all! Natural systems 'self-organize' to what we call the 'edge-of-chaos' where stability and change swap places over time (i.e. organizations dissolve into chaos and new ones form from chaos into organization).

Let us look now at cause and effect. Often we assume that the bigger the cause the greater the effect. That, sadly, is another delusion debunked by complexity science. We find due to the 'butterfly effect' that trivial changes can have massive effects, and conversely, due to attractor dynamics, that massive changes can have no wanted effect at all, but often many unwanted ones ! This is due to the prevalence of 'feedback' (both positive and negative) which makes all (not trivial) systems 'nonlinear', i.e. what you expect doesn't happen because the mathematical law of superposition no longer holds! This helps explain why government actions, based upon standard assumptions, seem always to make things worst.

An additional aspect here is that complex systems are multicausal, each event has multiple causes and each cause has multiple effects – the single cause single effect model usually used does not apply to such systems.

One important aspect of complexity studies relates to emergence, which means that new properties come into being at a higher level of structure than that of the parts.

Surprisingly to many scientists these properties cannot be predicted at all from the parts but are found to have a 'downward causation' on part behaviours – they constrain the system

freedoms.

But the way this happens goes beyond the mathematics of simple systems which prohibit novelty, i.e. $1+1=3$ is mathematically impossible, we now need an improved, complexity compatible, mathematics.

Another aspect relates to coevolution, which tells us that isolated systems do not behave the same as environmentally situated ones, different options can manifest which are never seen in isolated laboratory situations. This is important especially when we consider observers as part of that environment – the observer is changed by the system as well as they change the system – causality is two way (3rd Order Cybernetics).

There is much more to say perhaps, especially about 'synergy' – which shows us that interacting groups can find novel solutions that are simply not available to individual ones, but those interested can investigate our free website which contains introductions, essays and papers on all these subjects, plus many links to work by other experts in these areas and related ones: <http://www.calresco.org/themes.htm>

Suggested online reading:

Setting The Scene - Science, Humanity and Interaction

<http://www.calresco.org/setting.htm>

Breaking Our Mental Chains

<http://www.calresco.org/lucas/breaking.htm>

Metahuman Science

<http://www.calresco.org/lucas/science.htm>

A Logic of Complex Values
<http://www.calresco.org/lucas/logic.htm>

Holarchic Meta-Ethics and Complexity Science
<http://www.calresco.org/lucas/holarch.htm>

Complexity Theory: Actions for a Better World
<http://www.calresco.org/action.htm>

Intrinsic and Holarchic Education
<http://www.calresco.org/educate.htm>

Synergy and Complexity Science
<http://www.calresco.org/wp/synergy.htm>

Connecting Synergistically
<http://www.calresco.org/lucas/connect.htm>

Value Metascience and Synergistic Choice
<http://www.calresco.org/cs2000/meta.htm>

Freedom Beyond Control
<http://www.calresco.org/lucas/freedom.htm>

Global Power Networks
<http://www.calresco.org/lucas/global.htm>

Multidimensional Economics
<http://www.calresco.org/lucas/economic.htm>

Incentives and Disincentives - Organizational Dynamics
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BOOK REVIEW:

Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle by Arne Naess

Cambridge University Press,
1993

Updated, revised, and translated
by David Rothberg

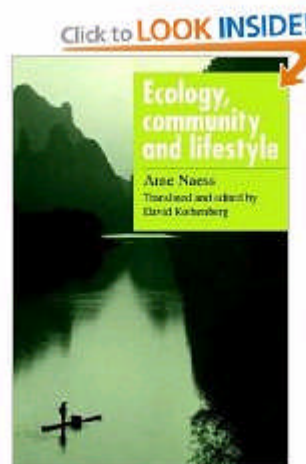
Review by Karl Rogers

In this book, Arne Naess offered us a critical and reflective argument for Deep Ecology (a term which he first coined in 1973). He argued for a non-anthropocentric paradigm shift in how we understand values and how we relate to the natural world.

Even though this book is in places somewhat theoretically obscure and contradictory, it is also profound and essential reading for anyone interested in value theory, as well as anyone who is interested in Deep Ecology and environmental philosophy.

This book contains Naess' discussions of the environmental crisis and Deep Ecology movement; ecology and ecosophy; facts, values, and norms; technology; lifestyle; economics; politics; and personal philosophy (ecosophy) should be developed in relation to an awareness of the unity, diversity, and value of life.

Naess' philosophy was rooted in activism, and he had a sophisticated understanding of politics, economics, and class divisions. This has been often missed by Marxists and critics on the New Left who have overly focused on Naess' criticisms of socialism. His



http://www.amazon.com/Ecology-Community-Lifestyle-Outline-Ecosophy/dp/0521348730/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1232579566&sr=1-1

discussions of equality, international law, direct action, non-violence, and sustainable development are insightful and far reaching.

In discussing his philosophy of Self-Realisation, wherein a person finds meaning and value in relation to understanding their connections and relations with all other beings, Naess describes how we move from our intuitions towards a systematically developed personal philosophy.

This book has been often criticised for its heavy-handed and idiosyncratic use of linguistic theory and vocabulary, which does make it heavy going for readers unfamiliar with Naess' earlier writings and his terminology, but, if the reader is able to struggle through this, then this book is worth all the effort and head-scratching.

Editor's Endnote:

The Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess died on the 12th January 2009, aged 96. As well as being the founder of Deep Ecology and a respected philosopher, he was also a dedicated environmental activist, a political candidate for the Norwegian Green Party, and a mountaineer. His writings were deeply inspired by Buddhism and the philosophies of Spinoza and Gandhi. He developed his philosophy of science in relation to psychology, linguistics, and ecology, but he also discussed politics and economics at length and in detail.

His philosophy, named ecosophy (or Ecosophy T, as he preferred to name it, after the mountain hut Tvergastein in which he wrote many of his books), advocated that everyone should develop their own personal philosophy, each having Self-Realisation at their core, within which one finds meaning and value in relation to the discovery of one's part in an ecospheric whole. By discovering one's true ecological self, in terms of one's relation to each and every other being, each person realises themselves as a being with intrinsic value within the ecospheric whole.

There are many crucial differences between Naess' Ecosophy T and Nick Maxwell's 'philosophy of wisdom', but there are also many interesting and fruitful connections and parallels that are worth exploring. Like Maxwell, Naess was deeply concerned with how human beings can develop science, philosophy, and society in ways that promote a meaningful and sustainable realisation of value for all life. Both were highly critical of positivism and the dominance of empiricism over science and the philosophy of science.



However, two important differences cannot be ignored: (1) Naess was critical of the metaphysical supposition that asserts the unification of science. Instead he advocated scientific pluralism, wherein, at any time, there can be a number of equally valid incommensurable scientific theories, all of which can explain and describe reality. (2) He was critical of value-objectivism. For Naess, values cannot be adequately understood as either subjective or objective, but should be understood as relational within the life project of Self-Realisation.

While advocates of Deep Ecology would find a great deal of intellectual value in Nick Maxwell's "philosophy of wisdom", arguably, Nick's philosophy and his conceptions of value and 'wisdom-inquiry' would benefit from a critical reading of Arne Naess' philosophy.

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