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PEGASUS

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CAUX ROUND TABLE FOR MORAL CAPITALISM
NETWORK LOOKING AT BUSINESS ABOVE THE CLUTTER AND CONFETTI



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Introduction

The current issue of the journal, Foreign Affairs, is devoted to “The Age of Uncertainty.” I have received 4 or 5 special reports from McKinsey on challenges of the “new era,” which apparently is upon us.

There is widespread distemper and anxiety in the West. The political chaos in the U.K. is unprecedented in recent centuries. A majority of Americans fear for the survival of its constitutional democracy, given polarized antagonisms. In recent years, many respected commentators on international relations lament the “collapse” of the liberal world order established after the last world war. On the economic side, the theme of globalization in retreat is very much *au courant*.

So, what is happening in our world and what could/should we do about it?

An important departure was the February 4 pact between President Putin of Russia and President Xi of China, declaring an end to the relevance of the “Western Enlightenment world order” and proposing its replacement by “populist nationalisms,” such as prevail today in Russia and China. Russia then invaded Ukraine, in violation of the laws and norms of the liberal international order and China has become an absolutist, one-party dictatorship, with “Chinese characteristics” in its politics, economy and culture, with every subject under constant surveillance to ensure their obedience.

What can be a successful alternative to this new world order of “blood and soil” identity politics?

This issue of *Pegasus* presents such an alternative – education of the virtuous individual.

First, the issue brings you an essay of mine on the overlooked importance of Mussolini and his fascism. It was 100 years ago, on October 27, that Mussolini organized his March on Rome. That insurrection brought him to the prime ministership of Italy, whereupon he created the modern corporatist state to implement national socialism, which he called fascism, as all citizens were bound together, one to another, by the state in order to bring power and wealth to the national community.

As I point out in this essay, such “national socialism” today reigns supreme in Russia and China. It is the most potent rival of free market capitalism and constitutional democratic governance, where the people, not the party or the leader, are truly sovereign.

I end my essay with this conclusion:

When the Soviet Union collapsed, Francis Fukuyama proposed that the “end of history” had arrived in that for the future, liberal regimes privileging constitutional governance and capitalism would prevail in the various nations of our world. Today, that proposition has not been substantiated by events. Nationalist populism – Mussolini’s legacy – is touted as the coming trend in many countries.

How might our global community keep this mighty legacy from reviving fascist illiberalism, oppressions and conflicts, whereby the person is subordinated to the collective and as Thomas Hobbes worried, “The life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short”?

The four essays that follow mine answer this question.

Our second essay, by our Associate Editor, Michael Hartoonian, elaborates on how we might prevent the success of “Mussolini-ism.” He sets forth a program of education of the person for virtue and responsibility. This is the education most suitable, he says, of the new era now upon us, a time of troubles, which calls upon us to ask “why?”

He speaks of an education that prepares one for holding the office of citizen to check and balance the dark side of our natures which welcomes and promotes the Mussolini’s among us.

Thirdly, Richard Van Scotter elaborates on Michael’s general introduction to a wise education, with an emphasis on civic education. Civics is our lives in community, not a fascist *volksgemeinschaft*, but a liberal, open, self-assured, modest and caring – a civilized – society.

Van Scotter juxtaposes the materialism of technology and its progress in raising our standards of living with the intangibles of meaning and living with self-confident agency, knowing who we are, where we have come from and where we should be going as good people.

Our fourth essay, by Charles Mattioli, recalls for us the genius of the Scottish Enlightenment – different from the European Enlightenment of Descartes, Voltaire and Kant. The Scottish Enlightenment, actually very Protestant, balanced reason with virtue. Thus, our self-interest was to be “understood upon the whole” and not by any exclusively self-referential, narcissistic or exploitative ambition.

The fifth and final essay is by our colleague and futurist, Tom Abeles, who brings forward in time present and time future how education of all persons globally can evolve. Tom contrasts the human experience with becoming educated as a fatalistic fall into a pinball machine, where we are small, self-contained little balls “slapped” around by the pins and moved by an unseen mover, with a far more appealing vision of using the internet to balance our individualism with our environment. My take on Tom’s presentation is to place the most effort and value on the individual in order to better the environment.

Stephen B. Young
Global Executive Director
Caux Round Table for Moral Capitalism



Il Duce's Long Shadow

The 100th Anniversary of Mussolini's March on Rome

by Stephen B. Young

On October 27, 1922, some 25,000 black uniformed followers of Benito Mussolini gathered in Rome to demand the resignation of the government and the appointment of a new fascist administration. The Italian state collapsed. Mussolini was asked to become prime minister. Thus, commenced the first fascist regime.

Now, one hundred years later – almost to the day – the Brothers of Italy has become the largest party in the newly elected Italian parliament. Its leader, Giorgia Meloni, has become Italy's prime minister, the first woman to hold that position. The Brothers of Italy has its roots in older fascist parties, starting with Mussolini's fascist movement.

Before starting a new party with an identarian orientation of Italian nationalism, Mussolini had been a director of the Italian Socialist Party. That party expelled him for being too “nationalist” – supporting Italy's entry into World War I.

During World War I, Mussolini wrote:

The nation has not disappeared. We used to believe that the concept was totally without substance. Instead, we see the nation arise as a palpitating reality before us! ... Class cannot destroy the nation. Class reveals itself as a collection of interests—but the nation is a history of sentiments, traditions, language, culture and race. Class can become an integral part of the nation, but the one cannot eclipse the other. The class struggle is a vain formula, without effect and consequence wherever one finds a people that has not integrated itself into its proper linguistic and racial confines—where the national problem has not been definitely resolved. In such circumstances, the class movement finds itself impaired by an inauspicious historic climate.

Italian nationalism advocated martial heroism, total sacrifice of individualism and equality to one's nation, the need of discipline and obedience in society, the grandeur and power of

ancient Rome. In this vein, Mussolini would later advocate creating a new Italian empire.

In 1919, Mussolini's new National Fascist Party issued a manifesto with its demands for change in Italy favoring the working class. Among the demands were calls for:

- Universal suffrage.
- Voting for women.
- Representation at government level of newly created national councils by economic sector.
- The abolition of the Italian Senate (at the time, the Senate, as the upper house of parliament, was, by process, elected by the wealthier citizens, but were, in reality, direct appointments by the king. It has been described as a sort of extended council of the crown).
- The formation of a national council of experts for labor; for industry; for transportation; for the public health; for communications; etc. Selections to be made of professionals or of tradesmen with legislative powers and elected directly to a general commission with ministerial powers.
- An eight-hour workday for all workers.
- A minimum wage.
- The participation of workers' representatives in industry commissions.
- Reduction of the retirement age from 65 to 55.
- A progressive tax on capital assets.

As an anti-capitalist movement, fascism carried forward with new rigor the syndicalist or national socialist application of socialism. Its rival from the left was the more traditional Marxist international socialism, as practiced by international communism in both its Soviet and Trotskyite versions. Karl Marx's rejection of national socialism had been put forth in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*.

Mussolini's alternative to both free market capitalism and class-conscious socialism was corporatism – the organization of a national society into sectors of activity under the overall superintendence of the government. Corporatism sought cooperation between classes, not conflict. With corporatism, a nation would reach its maximum efficiency through harmony among all its working sub-sectors – business, agriculture, finance, family and religion. The sociology approach of structural functionalism provides a non-Marxist theoretical foundation for corporatism.



Benito Mussolini

Mussolini also followed the teachings of Georges Sorel, whose program for replacing bourgeois society was summarized in his book, *Reflections on Violence*. Roughly,

Sorel advocated a combination of myth and violence to frighten the bourgeoisie and thus, bring about their craven submission to new rulers of the state.

After Sorel's introduction of myth as fundamental to syndicalist rule, Mussolini would use mythic memories of ancient Rome to inspire the Italian people and mobilize them behind his party and administration. In 1921, Sorel would write that Mussolini was "a man no less extraordinary than Lenin."

Sorel's reliance on myth in radical politics also opened the door for Hitler to promote ethnic Aryan supremacy, expressed in the right of the German people to build for themselves an Aryan *volksgemeinschaft*. Ethnic identities, thus, produced the *volk* or the "national" component in "national socialism."



Georges Sorel

The contribution of *volksgemeinschaft* thinking and feeling to fascism was foundational to the success of such movements and regimes. The myths associate with a *volk* (such as Italy as a mythic new Rome; Russia as a mythic Third Rome; the Japanese imperial family descending from the Sun Goddess Amaterasu; China having a Mandate of Heaven; America as a "City upon a Hill"), along with a *volk's* norms, rituals, holidays, customs, modal personality provide emotional and psychological meaning to members of the *volk*. That meaning could easily be appropriated by a ruling elite and used for the content of a hegemonic discourse regime for the *volk*, legitimating and sustaining cultural and social rule by that elite over the community. Today, this process is often called out as "populist nationalism."

By turning to the *volk* for legitimacy and policy guidance, fascism turned its back on the values of the European Enlightenment, which were universal and so privileged the reason of individuals more than unquestioned obeisance to communal traditions.

In his notable study of the effects of capitalism – *The Great Transformation* – Karl Polanyi (1886 - 1964) discussed the two principal alternatives to that economic system – left socialism and right socialism (which we call national socialism or "fascism"). Polanyi's point, which should not be overlooked, was that both these socialisms had been created to undo the disruptions of capitalism, which had privileged "money power" to degrade human sociality into atomic individualism driven by self-seeking greed.

His observation that the national socialist/fascist modality of anti-capitalism brought about "Irrational philosophies; racialist aesthetics; anti-capitalist demagogy; heterodox currency views; criticism of the party system; and widespread disparagement of the "regime" (p. 238) provides criteria for assessing what political movement or regime can be understood as "fascist."

One very important lesson to be learned from Polanyi's taxonomy of a fascist movement or regime is that fascism rejects the norms of the European Enlightenment, which build upon human reason and the capacity of individuals to think for themselves over and above any contingent and parochial religious, class, racial, ethnic, gender affiliations or orientations which they might have or favor. "Irrationality" and "racialist aesthetics" cannot find a welcome home in any Enlightened mind. Thus, the rise of fascist orientations is a return to pre-modern modes of social organization and cultural outlooks.

Mussolini's Template – A Lasting Historical Legacy

Mussolini's template for a nationalist socialism would be adopted around the world, first in Germany and then by Francisco Franco in Spain. It would also survive the collapse of his regime in Italy.

Fascism and identity politics have much in common. Identity politics can lead to fascist authoritarianism and authoritarian leaders very often rely on identity politics to legitimate their right to rule and their policies.

In his fascism, Hitler would put a German spin on Mussolini's model with notions like *volks-gemeinschaft* – a people's beloved community – and the *fuhrerprinzip* – a single authoritarian leader for every collective effort in the society.

In 1929, Plutarco Elias Calles, who styled himself the *Jefe Máximo* (Supreme Chief) of the Mexican Revolution, founded the National Revolutionary Party. Under different names, it would be Mexico's ruling party until 2000. The political philosophy of the party was corporatist and its regime was a one-party state, with powers of supervision over all classes and the economy.

In Thailand, formerly Siam, a coup in 1932 marginalized the monarchy and its affiliated aristocratic families, replacing them with more of a corporatist state promoting authentic "Thai" values. In 1938, military officer Pibul became the regime's principal leader. He allied Thailand with Japan in World War II.

In 1935, Mao Zedong became the informal leader of the Chinese Communist Party. His political philosophy of "Maoism" would be a mishmash of syndicalism, proletarian communism and Chinese White Lotus Manichaeism. Mao was most focused on properly organizing his own Chinese people in the tradition of neo-Confucians before him. He was less concerned with supporting the Soviet Union's commitment to international communism.

In 1937, Franco would create a party in Spain with the name Traditionalist Spanish Phalanx of the Councils of the National Syndicalist Offensive. The party would fight and win a civil war against internationalist socialists and communists.

In 1946, Juan Peron was elected president of Argentina, presenting himself as the embodiment of the Argentine nation. His political program, justicialism, positioned itself as an alternative to capitalism and socialism. Its three pillars were social justice, economic independence and political sovereignty.

Some of Peron's maxims were:

- As an economic doctrine, justicialism proposes a social market, putting capital to the service of the economy and the well-being of the people.
- As a social doctrine, justicialism carries out social justice, which gives each person their rights in accordance to their social function.
- Working is a right that creates the dignity of men and it's a duty because it's fair that everyone should produce as much as they consume at the very least.
- Politics are not an end, but a means for the well-being of Argentina, which means happiness for our children and greatness for our nation.
- The two arms of Peronism are social justice and social help. With them, we can give a hug of justice and love to the people.
- Peronism desires national unity and not struggle.

The Kim family's regime in North Korea has rested its practices since 1948 on the idea of *juche*. Kim Il Sung defined *juche* as principally a fascist approach to governing:

First, the government of the republic will implement with all consistency the line of independence, self-sufficiency and self-defense to consolidate the political independence of the country, build up more solidly the foundations of an independent national economy capable of insuring the complete unification, independence and prosperity of our nation and increasing the country's defense capabilities, so as to safeguard the security of the fatherland reliably by our own force, by splendidly embodying our party's idea of juche in all fields.

Elsewhere in Latin America, more than a dollop of Mussolini's methods can be detected in the more recent Latin American regimes of Fidel Castro, Hugo Chavez and Daniel Ortega.

Castro once declared, "We are not only Marxist-Leninists, but also nationalists and patriots." Both Karl Marx and Jose Marti influenced his thought and his politics. In this, he drew upon a longstanding tradition of Cuban nationalism. Castro advocated the very bourgeois values of hard work, family loyalty, personal integrity and self-discipline. As with Mussolini, his was a one-party state of which he was *Il Duce*, the supreme leader.

Hugo Chavez proposed a motto for his Bolivarian revolution of "Motherland, Socialism or Death." His policies were state control of enterprise, social welfare programs (known as Bolivarian missions) and opposition to free markets, as recommended by the IMF and

the World Bank. His Venezuelan socialism accepted private property, but promoted social property, as well. In January 2007, Chávez proposed to build a “communal” state grounded on self-governing collectives, like communal councils, communes and communal cities.

Daniel Ortega developed a version of “Sandinismo,” which relied upon alliances between rural communities and the bourgeoisie under his supervision.

In Brazil’s October 2, 2022 presidential election, incumbent President Jair Bolsonaro won more votes than expected and qualified for a run-off election with his rival, former President Lula da Silva. Bolsonaro is commonly said to be “from the right” and Lula da Silva “from the left.” But there is also commentary delving into Bolsonaro’s policies and popular appeal, asking whether he properly could be called a “fascist.”

Since fascism also sprung from the socialist movement, the differences between Bolsonaro and da Silva (“Lula,” to many) are only those between two different orientations of socialism, one inclusive of all classes and the other focused primarily on the working class, following traditional Marxist thinking.

Bolsonaro’s appeal has been summarized in a name for a movement – *Bolsonarismo*. Bolsonaro identifies with traditional values as signifiers of the true and righteous Brazilian *volks-gemeinschaft*. He defines those outside the true *volk* as *vagabundos* – bums. These are the outsiders, the unrespectable, the undeserving burdens on society, those without propriety. Bolsonaro also spoke up for the traditional value of *machismo*, giving stature to men and their role in families and society. He argued that citizens should be able to carry firearms to protect themselves and culturally, he privileged the military. He appealed to young men in the working class who identified strongly with hard work and honesty, even though poor. He assailed drug dealers. He disparaged the credentialed elite and rested honor on religion and personal experience. And he praised personal self-determination through entrepreneurship.

He personally reached out to voters. It was observed that for many lower class voters, a vote for Bolsonaro was a vote for the law, order in the community and a sense of belonging.

In 1957, Sukarno in Indonesia proposed a form of centralized government which mirrored aspects of Mussolini’s national socialism in order to overcome ethnic and political fragmentation among Indonesian citizens. His program was called Indonesian socialism, which included guided democracy, guided economy and Indonesian identity (*kepribadian Indonesia*).

In April 1975, Pol Pot, a Sino-Khmer by birth, added something of Maoism to his Khmer Rouge nation-building program for Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge proposed to restore the greatness of the Khmer people by removing from their midst all the “bad” people. Cadres would announce, “If you live, we gain nothing. If you die, we lose nothing. So, why not kill you today?”

Putin's Russia Channels Mussolini

Today, Putin's Russia, rather nicely, fits the fascist paradigm. For example, when incorporating Ukrainian territory into Russia, Putin said:

The West is ready to step over everything in order to preserve the neo-colonial system that allows it to parasitize, in fact, to plunder the world at the expense of the power of the dollar and technological dictates, to collect real tribute from humanity, to extract the main source of unearned prosperity, the rent of the hegemon. The maintenance of this rent is their key, genuine and absolutely self-serving motive. That is why total desovereignization is in their interests. Hence, their aggression towards independent states, towards traditional values and original cultures, attempts to undermine international and integration processes beyond their control, new world currencies and centers of technological development.



Vladimir Putin

I want to emphasize once again: it is precisely in greed, in the intention to maintain its unlimited power, that there are the real reasons for the hybrid war that the “collective West” is waging against Russia. They do not wish us freedom, but they want to see us as a colony. They do not want equal cooperation, but robbery. They want to see us not as a free society, but as a crowd of soulless slaves.

For them, a direct threat is our thought and philosophy and therefore, they encroach on our philosophers. Our culture and art are a danger to them, so they are trying to ban them. Our development and prosperity is also a threat to them – competition is growing. They don't need Russia at all, we need it. And I want to end my speech with the words of a true patriot, Ivan Alexandrovich Ilyin: “If I consider Russia my Motherland, then this means that I love in Russian, contemplate and think, sing and speak Russian; that I believe in the spiritual strength of the Russian people. His spirit is my spirit; his fate is my fate; his suffering is my grief; its flowering is my joy.” Behind us is the truth, behind us is Russia!

Putin's aggression against Ukraine has typical fascist sacral national destiny for its legitimation: the Rus people deserve to take territory unjustly occupied by Ukrainians.

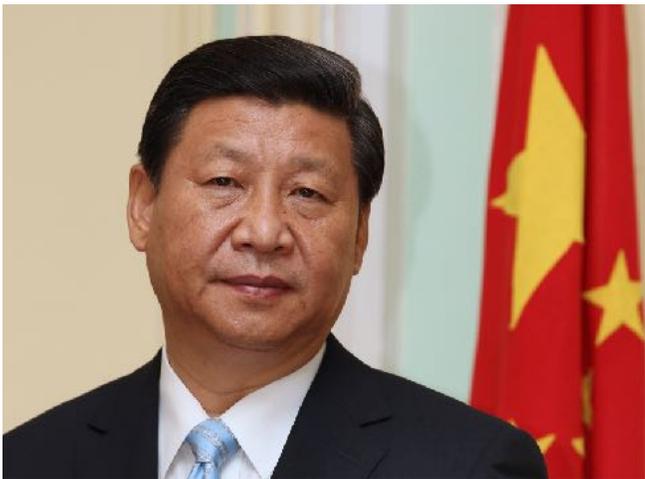
Moreover, the Russian Orthodox Church has called on the Russian people to support the war against Ukraine. That church promulgated a social doctrine in 2000 in a long statement which insists that:

In all times, the Church has called upon her children to love their homeland on earth and not to spare their lives to protect it if it was threatened. The Russian Church, on many occasions, gave her blessing to the people for them to take part in liberation wars.

Christian patriotism may be expressed at the same time with regard to a nation as an ethnic community and as a community of its citizens. The Orthodox Christian is called to love his fatherland, which has a territorial dimension and his brothers by blood who live everywhere in the world. This love is one of the ways of fulfilling God's commandment of love to one's neighbour, which includes love to one's family, fellow-tribesmen and fellow-citizens.

The patriotism of the Orthodox Christian should be active. It is manifested when he defends his fatherland against an enemy, works for the good of the motherland, cares for the good order of people's life through, among other things, participation in the affairs of government. The Christian is called to preserve and develop national culture and people's self-awareness. (emphasis in the original)

When a nation, civil or ethnic, represents fully or predominantly a monoconfessional Orthodox community, it can, in a certain sense, be regarded as the one community of faith — an Orthodox nation.



Xi Jinping

Xi Jinping's China also Channels Mussolini

Xi Jinping's China, with its economy, education and personal lives (the social credit system of punishment and reward) managed according to "Chinese characteristics" by a political party, with a government and security services subordinate to its diktat, is more corporatist than

Communist. Its ruling elite is not proletarian, but bureaucratic, disciplined, highly educated and wealthy.

On October 16, 2022, Xi Jinping confirmed at the opening of the 20th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party that China, under the party's governance, has become a "national socialist" state. Xi proudly acknowledged that the party had become the custodian of a Chinese *volksgemeinschaft*, confirming in public that, in other words, Chinese communism has evolved into fascism, as first invented by Mussolini 100 years ago.

It is no accident that many are now calling Xi the *Lingxiu* of China, which can rightly be translated, in his case, as *Il Duce* in Italian or *Der Fuhrer* in German.

Xi said:

Our party has dedicated itself to achieving lasting greatness for the Chinese nation. ... Over the past five years, we have continued to strengthen the overall leadership of the party and the centralized, unified leadership of the Central Committee. ... To uphold and develop Marxism, we must integrate it with China's fine traditional culture. Only by taking root in the rich historical and cultural soil of the country and the nation can the truth of Marxism flourish here. With a history stretching back to antiquity, China's fine traditional culture is extensive and profound; it is the crystallization of the wisdom of Chinese civilization. Our traditional culture espouses many important principles and concepts, including pursuing common good for all; regarding the people as the foundation of the state; governing by virtue; discarding the outdated in favor of the new; selecting officials on the basis of merit; promoting harmony between humanity and nature; ceaselessly pursuing self-improvement; embracing the world with virtue; acting in good faith and being friendly to others; and fostering neighborliness. These maxims, which have taken shape over centuries of work and life, reflect the Chinese people's way of viewing the universe, the world, society and morality and are highly consistent with the propositions of scientific socialism.

We must stay confident in our history and culture, make the past serve the present and develop the new from the old. We must integrate the essence of Marxism with the best of fine traditional Chinese culture and with the common values that our people intuitively apply in their everyday lives. We should keep endowing Marxist theory with distinctive Chinese features and consolidating the historical basis and public support for adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of our times. With this, we will ensure that Marxism puts down deep roots in China. ... Chinese Communists are keenly aware that only by integrating the basic tenets of Marxism with China's specific realities and fine traditional culture and only by applying dialectical and historical materialism can we provide correct answers to the major questions presented by the times and discovered through practice and can we ensure that Marxism always retains its vigor and vitality.

To uphold and develop Marxism, we must integrate it with China's specific realities. Taking Marxism as our guide means applying its worldview and methodology to solving problems in China; it does not mean memorizing and reciting its specific conclusions and lines and still less does it mean treating it as a rigid dogma. We must continue to free our minds, seek truth from facts, move with the times and take a realistic and pragmatic approach. ...

With no embarrassment, Xi so very forthrightly admits that international, scientific, proletarian Marxist dialectical materialism has been subordinated to Chinese normativity.

We have established the Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. In doing so, we have laid out the basic policy for upholding and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics, put forward a series of new ideas, new thinking and new strategies on national governance and achieved a new breakthrough in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of our times. We have endeavored to use this new theory to arm ourselves intellectually, guide our practice and advance our work. This theory provides us with fundamental guidance for advancing the cause of our party and our country in the new era.

By using corporatist economics directed by the party (“Socialism with Chinese Characteristics”), Xi boasted that China has abolished poverty.

Religious Foundations for Regimes Trending Towards Fascism

Religions, too, can provide identity content for a unique *volkgemeinschaft*. This is currently the case with Iran and India and to a significant extent, in Israel. Over the centuries, religious practices have significantly contributed to national identity formation in England; Scotland; Ireland; Norway; The Netherlands; Spain; Italy; the Puritan colonies in North America; Saudi Arabia; Pakistan; Tibet; Thailand; and Japan. But not every religious community becomes the basis for an intolerant, authoritarian political regime resembling a theocracy.

India Under Narendra Modi and Hindu Identity

For India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi, today’s sovereign nation state of India is a *volkgemeinschaft* based on Hinduism. A glowing news story from November 2018 said:

After decades of fractured mandates and coalition governments, India was blessed with a majority government in 2014 and again in 2019, mainly because one inspired leader, Narendra Modi, could successfully connect with the contemporary zeitgeist of the electorate. The ability of a leader for self-abnegation of one’s ‘atman’ to commune with the spirit of a nation is a rare, but not an unprecedented occurrence in Indian history. It has happened before, in the case of the Father of Nation, Mahatma Gandhi.

Narendra Modi



In fact, the Green Grids Initiative – One Sun, One World, One Grid, the idea first put forth by Modi at the First Assembly of the International Solar Alliance in October 2018, aims to link Asia, Africa and later, the entire world, to the sun – the energy equivalent of the spiritual *Supreme Being* (*Brahman* or Godhead).

This explanation of the importance of Vedanta can be found on the prime minister’s website:

With the power to ignite and illuminate human consciousness, Vedanta has fostered and nourished every facet of Indian life and culture for centuries, making India the most resilient and glorious civilization in the world. Many of Vedanta’s peerless precepts, culled from its three principal sources of the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagvad Gita, today guide modern Indian defence and foreign policy. The profundity of Vedanta ideology has left an indelible mark on India’s indigenous thought and vision. The Vedanta outlook has permeated Indian society and enabled it to transcend denomination-driven thought. India’s composite society and the cultural assimilation over centuries of foreign ideological and religious strands is proof enough. For an individual Indian, the highest form of consciousness is the awareness of being “Indian” and belonging to the Indian civilisation ethos despite individual diversities. This is akin to the Atman’s symphony with the Brahman.

Iran Under the Ayatollahs – A Qur’anic *Volksgemeinschaft*

In Iran, since the coming to power of the Ayatollah Khomeini, a clerical regime has imposed on the Iranian people a socially constructed *volksgemeinschaft*, coincident with those who live their lives in every respect according to the regime’s interpretation of Qur’an. Today, thousands of Iranians have taken to protest that confining construction of who they should be. They believe, contrary to clerical indoctrination, that Iranian citizens can have freedom of belief, dress and conduct.

The United States: To Be Determined

To be uncomfortably frank, Mussolini’s precedent is not without its application in the U.S.

For example, a “racialist aesthetic” mode of anti-capitalism has emerged in the application of critical race theory to public and private institutions. Critical race theory proposes that American culture, society, business and government promote systemic white racism to give favorable, but unequal life outcomes to persons with Caucasian genetic ancestry and thus, imposes unfavorable life outcomes on others who do not share such ancestry. Critical race theory holds that race, as a conceptual framework, is socially constructed in order to oppress and exploit persons of color and that such “fiction” is inherent in the law and legal institutions of the U.S. insofar as they function to create and maintain social, economic and political inequalities between whites and nonwhites, especially African Americans.

Critical race theory ignores that median household income for many South Asian Americans, East Asian Americans and recent immigrants from Ghana and Nigeria is much higher than the median household income for “white” Americans. According to Matt Rosenberg of Wirepoints, 2020 Census data shows that a black married couple with children had a median income of \$94,493. In contrast, a black female household head with children, but no spouse present, earned an annual median income of just \$34,544. Median family income for all white families was \$77,000.

Critical race theory is given practical implementation through race-conscious programs of diversity, equity and inclusion, where persons who are denominated “white” are disfavored in employment and speech in order to give preference to those who are denominated Black, Indigenous and people of color or who present themselves as lesbian, gay, trans or otherwise gender non-conforming.

On October 4, 2021, U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland signed a memorandum “directing the Federal Bureau of Investigation, working with each United States Attorney, to convene meetings with federal, state, local, tribal and territorial leaders in each federal judicial district within 30 days of the issuance of this memorandum. These meetings will facilitate the discussion of strategies for addressing threats against school administrators, board members, teachers and staff and will open dedicated lines of communication for threat reporting, assessment and response.” This coordination was proposed as a response to parents of public school students complaining about the teaching of critical race theory in such government schools.

On April 27, 2022, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security established a Disinformation Governance Board to monitor open-source communications in the public domain to discover what government officials would consider to be threats to domestic security. Responding to very adverse public criticism, the board was disbanded on August 24, 2022.

In her 2016 campaign for the U.S. presidency, Hillary Clinton provided socially constructed criteria to distinguish between those who deserved to be included in the American “volk” and those who deserved to be excluded:

“You know, to just be grossly generalistic, you could put half of Trump’s supporters into what I call the basket of deplorables. Right?” Clinton said. “The racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamaphobic—you name it. And unfortunately, there are people like that. And he has lifted them up.”

Then, in his speech of September 1, 2022, U.S. President Joe Biden distinguished between “good” Americans, who follow their “better angels” and “bad” Americans, who follow their “worst instincts.”

According to President Biden, only the former deserve to be part of the rightful “American” community and receive the blessings of God, saying, “And may God protect all those who stand watch over our democracy.”

Those who do not deserve God’s blessing were, President Biden pointedly suggested, to be “canceled,” ostracized and effectively expunged from all polite American society. Thus, did Biden insist that the American “*volk*” consist only of some citizens and not all:

Donald Trump and the MAGA Republicans represent an extremism that threatens the very foundations of our republic. ...

MAGA Republicans look at America and see carnage and darkness and despair. They spread fear and lies -- lies told for profit and power. ...

I made a bet on you, the American people, and that bet is paying off. Proving that from darkness — the darkness of Charlottesville, of COVID, of gun violence, of insurrection — we can see the light. Light is now visible.

Light that will guide us forward not only in words, but in actions — actions for you, for your children, for your grandchildren, for America. And if we all do our duty — if we do our duty in 2022 and beyond, then ages still to come will say we — all of us here — we kept the faith. We preserved democracy. We heeded our wor- — we — we heeded not our worst instincts but our better angels. ...

Ladies and gentlemen, we can’t be pro-ex- — pro-ex- — pro-insurrectionist and pro-American. They’re incompatible. ...

And here, in my view, is what is true: MAGA Republicans do not respect the Constitution. They do not believe in the rule of law. They do not recognize the will of the people.

MAGA forces are determined to take this country backwards — backwards to an America where there is no right to choose, no right to privacy, no right to contraception, no right to marry who you love.

They promote authoritarian leaders and they fan the flames of political violence that are a threat to our personal rights, to the pursuit of justice, to the rule of law, to the very soul of this country.

They look at the mob that stormed the United States Capitol on January 6th — brutally attacking law enforcement — not as insurrectionists who placed a dagger to the throat of our democracy, but they look at them as patriots. ...

This is inflammatory. It’s dangerous. It’s against the rule of law. And we, the people, must say: This is not who we are. ...

MAGA Republicans have made their choice. They embrace anger. They thrive on chaos. They live not in the light of truth, but in the shadow of lies. ...

That's why tonight I'm asking our nation to come together, unite behind the single purpose of defending our democracy regardless of your ideology.

Democrats, independents, mainstream Republicans: We must be stronger, more determined and more committed to saving American democracy than MAGA Republicans are to — to destroying American democracy.

Given the current polarization among Americans, it would not stretch our imaginations too much to predict that those who identify themselves with the MAGA (Make America Great Again) movement association with former President Donald Trump would easily decide to evict from their American “volk” those they disagreed with. Those nominated for eviction from that “volk” of traditionalists would likely be champions of critical race theory; diversity, equity and inclusion discriminations; gender fluidity; very permissive acceptance of abortions; free college education and healthcare; drastic elimination of fossil fuels; an end to toxic masculinity; and other identity badges of progressive points of view.

Conclusion

When the Soviet Union collapsed, Francis Fukuyama proposed that the “end of history” had arrived in that for the future, liberal regimes privileging constitutional governance and capitalism would prevail in the various nations of our world. Today, that proposition has not been substantiated by events. Nationalist populism – Mussolini’s legacy – is touted as the coming trend in many countries.

How might our global community keep this mighty legacy from reviving fascist illiberalism, oppressions and conflicts, whereby the person is subordinated to the collective and as Thomas Hobbes worried, “The life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short”?

By seeking balance and equilibrium, which create space for universal values of humane individualism and by not allowing our religions and our ethnicities, in which we rightly take pride and from which we gain moral sustenance, to turn us against others.

Stephen B. Young is Global Executive Director of the Caux Round Table for Moral Capitalism.

What Knowledge is of Most Worth?

Education's Purpose

by Michael Hartoonian

Introduction

“Why” questions are always the most complicated – and the most useful.

The why or philosophical questions are, indeed, the most useful, interesting and difficult questions we can entertain. They are the inquiries that separate us from animals. This is both an advantage and a curse. As Shakespeare asked, “What is a **man** if **the** chief good and market of his time be but to sleep and feed? **A beast no more.**” People must eat and sleep, but consider – animals feed; humans dine. Animals have sex; humans make love. Animals die; humans pass on. Why the difference? In a word, EDUCATION – the path from unconsciousness and innate reactions to consciousness and learned perspectives. All knowledge, however discovered or created, by any culture or cultures, is rooted in nature and derives lessons from consiliences with experiences that advantage us to create and discover what is moral. It is altogether true, therefore, that we have a duty to take up the joy, discipline and love revealed to us in history and the physical world. This benevolent duty is the one true purpose of education – that is, to make us better.

- *In 1798, the German philosopher Friedrich Schelling introduced the concept of “the secret bond” connecting our mind with nature. The idea has taken on more empirical weight since the 18th century.*

The Cultural Context

*Athens, itself, is a school where we understand that,
Any society that does not educate its warriors to be philosophers,
And its philosophers to be warriors,
Will have its wars fought by fools,
And its philosophy crafted by cowards.*
-Pericles, King of Athens

Are we becoming surrounded by cowards and fools?

As I look around the world, I witness many nation states and groups that are truncating our ethical, economic and social wisdom through laws banning rational thought, using religious doctrine over scientific grounded medicine and most of all, I see morally unfit leaders who believe that they can do whatever they care to because God or some warped sense of self and history said they should.

Have we come to believe that any individual or random group has the wisdom to be so certain about the depth of our ignorance? Do we understand the learning obligations of holding the office of citizen (and of leadership) and the humility to see the limits of our individual and collective knowledge? Do we understand the purpose and responsibility of a democratic/learning society?

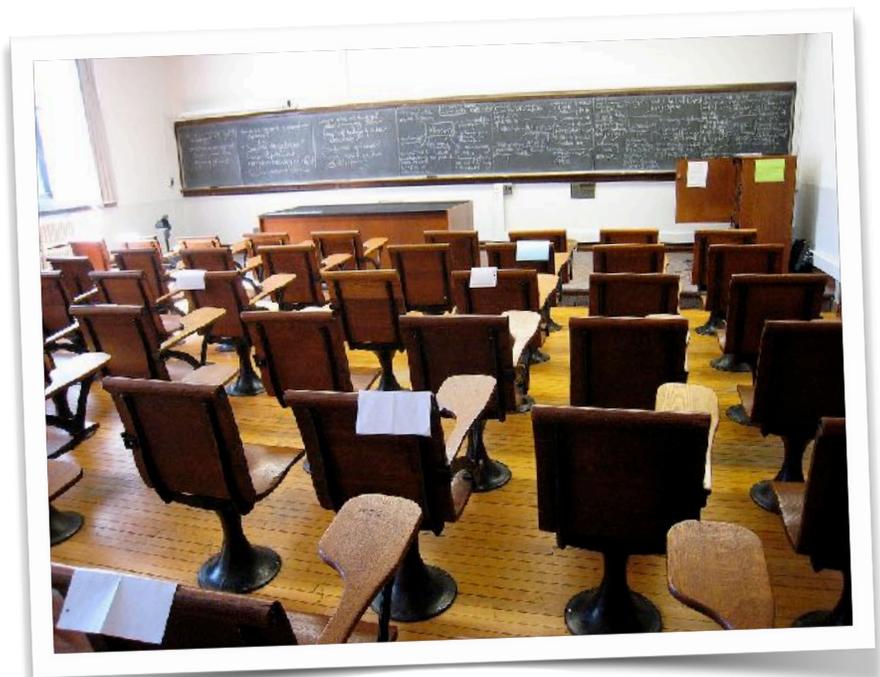
The fundamental understanding of teaching and learning is exactly what Pericles is talking about. It's about teaching relationships that are friendly, loving, connected and responsible. That is, transmitting to the next generation the elements of culture that provide the virtue and feedback loops that will allow us to carry on a conversation between the DNA of a democratic society and our genetic identity. At birth, our genes are arranged in a rather random set. Cultural education and individual learning should be about a critical consistency between the culture/environment and the development of the democratic mind, meaning that the only way to learn to be a democratic citizen is to be immersed in a democratic society. As Winston Churchill said: "First we shape our dwellings, then our dwellings shape us." This is the genius of teaching – why, what and how is this teaching/learning done? This essay is about defining those relationships.

Cultures created and held responsible four fundamental professions – **education**, then law, theology and medicine. In addition, within the context of a democratic republic, there is and must be a tension between the enlightened citizen and these professions. However, all must be responsible searchers for truth, which is always contested, as well as critically love the institutions and nation in which they spend their life's time. The tension is displayed in debate, defined by civility, intellectual rigor and the character to be able to consider the possibility that you or any of us, could be wrong.

Every society creates a cultural narrative. That narrative reflects identity and purpose and becomes that culture's curriculum. That curriculum informs survival. Early in the evolution of human society, it was clear that survival would depend on a family's or a community's memory and ability to discern a truth to discriminate among those cultural elements that should be passed on to the next generation and those that should be left behind, as well as elements to be created anew. These cultural values, which have a half-life of one generation, implicitly demand that people must evaluate these essential characteristics and teach them to each other and to their children. As societies advanced, this task became more complex and professions were created by cultures to do that work. In other words, who would help deal with and explain death, the cosmos and the mysteries of the hidden soul? Who would explain the need for order with justice? Who would deal with the sick and the nature of health? And who would take these ideas and intentionally and critically pass them on to the next generation?

Certainly, other groups of people would administer and guide the implementation of the cultural concepts, but the professions were created to judge which ideas and narratives were necessary for cultural survival. This is and has always been tricky business because of the changing nature of the cultural context and the nature of being human. Because of this complexity, citizens must cultivate a deep civic inquisitiveness and acquire a built-in scrap detector. When the culture works well, the professions, working in concert with one another – and the general wisdom of the people – debate, synthesize and recommend principles and policies that create more gentle and cultural beneficial changes on the landscape. What this means is that the professional's first responsibility is to the

veracity of the content or knowledge of the discipline in which they work. Thus, a medical doctor's first responsibility is to the science of medicine, not the patient. If she doesn't know the science, the patient suffers. Likewise, knowledge of the law is more important than the lawyer's client. In education, the student does not come first. The content of the discipline does. You can only teach what you know and to the degree that you put students, patients, clients or parishioners before disciplined inquiry, to that same degree, you corrupt their learning and well-being.

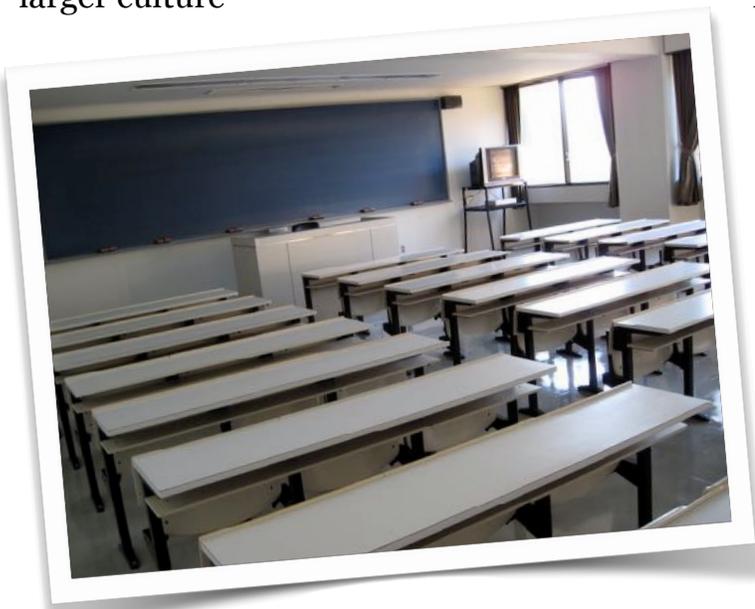


Social, economic, political and technical employees, as well as managers, evaluate, implement and reevaluate professional content. They must continually make corrections and suggestions to their applied content, primarily by adding strength of character to themselves and their institutions, allowing them to continue learning and live more independently and harmoniously with other citizens.

When real learning and debate are missing from the cultural curriculum, change (social, ethical, economic, etc.) can be brutal and often bloody. Without a learning culture, democratic and market-driven societies become problematic. It is altogether true that a culture creates professions, first, to protect the culture and secondly, to educate citizens into the possession of the critical and conditional mind. That is, a mind that is always in research mode. Such an intellect is always asking, “If we do this (X), then we expect that (Y) might happen.”

As listed above, the four classical professions so charged to attend to this challenge are education, medicine, religion and law. These four professions were created out of the ongoing need for cultural sustainability and crafted to protect, enhance and transmit the culture to the next generation. However, once a profession atrophies, caused either by outside or inside forces, it loses its first purpose and becomes irrelevant, corrupt and the larger culture

is put in danger. This often happens when intellectual laziness, selfishness or an irresistible dogma or ideology invades the cultural DNA. The task of the professions is to understand and mitigate the issue so it doesn't destroy the culture. Within a democratic republic, this evaluative transmittal is even more necessary, since a republican form of governance is based on a set of principles sustained through enlightened legal and ethical arguments among responsible, healthy and **educated** citizens. For example, any inequitable distribution of justice, manifested in different rules and



sanctions based on such differences as class, geography or ethnicities, diminishes the republic and leaves all citizens vulnerable to disillusion and cynicism. This does not mean, however, an abandonment of knowledge, as the behavior of the fearful and closed minded would suggest, prohibiting ideas simply because they disagree. What it demands is a debate regarding the limits of law, faith and science. Enlightened citizens, who constitute the fourth branch of government – The People – are responsible for continuing civil and civic debates. The principles of any republic are often at odds, one with another, and in need of serious debate. There have and always will be tensions between the law and moral sentiments. However, the law cannot be disregarded. It is always in play

within the civic and civil arguments that move the republic forward toward justice. However, to engage in the civic debate, an individual or group needs to have an ethical grounding, historical knowledge and the understanding that we are held together by a network that shares one value above all others – in a word, that value is “character.”

To this end, all four professions **teach** about self-governance and responsibility, understanding that **learning is uncomfortable**. Indeed, you will never learn a thing if you refuse discomfort! The profession of education helps students understand how to pursue truth. We have a choice: be comfortable or be truthful. This is the case because learning starts with the confession of ignorance. The educated person doesn’t just try to prove someone else’s argument incorrect, but works to prove his or her personal theory or argument incorrect. Teachers spend a lifetime trying to understand the long historic perspectives, empirical research, subjective faith and logic in deciding what knowledge to teach. In any democratic republic, the profession of education has the responsibility for teaching the general tenets of enlightened citizenship. However, all four professions teach citizens why they should and how they can govern themselves, as well as why justice must be understood and practiced as a necessary condition of civil society. Here, every citizen has power or agency because no one should be above the law and, thus, works to construct a level or just playing field. Just as we want physicians to explain the principles of good health, we need education and law professionals to teach the standards of truth and justice, understanding that justice always carries sanctions – Lady Liberty has a sword in her right hand. Armed with this knowledge so transmitted, citizens of a republic become more competent in discussing and acting on bringing balance to the fundamental value tensions of democracy, both in their private and civic lives.

Education: A Countervailing Force

If the world is insane, the school’s job is NOT to turn out insane people who can fit into society. Yet, that is exactly what schools and universities are doing in the name of relevance. In a recent editorial, the New York Times asked parents, teachers and others what they believed to be the purpose of schools. The answers were stated with grace and with a concern for the institution itself. Except for a few comments, however, the statements were about what contemporary society and students need – skills for work and citizenship, hope, safety, food and to read and do math. Comprehension of knowledge (of most worth), as well as being a critical thinker and debater, got little or no attention. Yet, we cannot comprehend anything absent a knowledge base. You may be able to read, but if you don’t understand the vocabulary and logic of science, for example, you will never comprehend the biological and physical worlds.

Within the current pedagogical belief system, we say that kids come first, not knowledge, nor the acquisition of such. Yet, children know they do not come first. The market comes first. Around the world, we know from World Health Organization data that children have the poorest diets, worst healthcare, are the poorest (birth – 20 years of age) financially and

let us not forget, the most abused. Children first? Perhaps we should stop lying to our children and to ourselves and take responsibility for our human and democratic future by addressing the knowledge of most worth. But today, we seem focused on amusement. We are intellectually lazy and have little sensitivity to what is going on in the world. Our minds have closed to truth and our energy turned inward – “Please, someone, help me make it through the day,” is the mantra.

Education should be the counter force to this contemporary madness.

Wanting to Know (Why) is Irresistible

We all have a desire to know, particularly when and what we realize we don't know. This desire is universal and irresistible, unless driven out of us. Knowledge is the original temptation of humankind and no child can overcome it for long. But it is a desire that grows by what it feeds on. This thirst is impossible to shake, particularly for people with curiosity, intellectual energy and the willingness to understand that they may be wrong in their knowledge base. Most of all, this desire to know is necessary to the development of the democratic or open mind, a mind that can hold at least two contradictory ideas at the same time and investigate the better way forward.

Why do I want to know? It's human nature. It makes me feel better. It helps me behave better. And it provides me with perspective. Ignorance remains bliss only to the intellectually blind. As soon as one sees that he or she is ignorant, that person wants not to be so. Of course, others may do all in their power to keep you from knowing.

We need a new theory about how the mind works, based on confronting our misconceptions about how the world works. We all carry fully developed theories or stories about ourselves and the world that are complex, explainable and for the most part, incorrect. These misconceptions are injurious to self and society, particularly a democratic society, simply because they are rooted in incompetence.

There is a relational sequence loop in the decline of a democracy. The sequence runs like this. First, any and every society absent attention and correction to relationships will become corrupt. The corruption stems from relational incompetence. That is, proper interactions with knowledge, people, institutions and the land. This incompetence always leads to violence. From the child who disrupts the classroom because she has not learned today's lesson, to the husband who slaps his wife because he cannot rationally discuss family issues, to a nation that invades another, causing war – these are all examples of violence brought on by incompetence. Of course, the only remedy to violence and its causes is to entertain the realities of the mind and attending pedagogy.



Education and A Changing World

Every once in a great while, a radical break appears in the continuity of time that shakes the foundations of society and its traditional values, declaring those values irrelevant to the vagaries of the present. Those breaks in time I call the “times between the times,” one of which we are passing through now and trying to decide if we should embrace the fracture with all its fears and opportunities or ignore natural and social history at our great peril. What makes our time so dangerous, but not unique, is the growing reality that we have lost our intellectual and moral directions and continue to blame political leaders, family breakdown, a dumbing down of and by media and inequities of income across the globe. It doesn't seem to occur to us that the most insidious inequality is inequalities of knowledge, including the knowledge of being human.

To say it again: there is no doubt that institutional corruption and the inequalities of income are damaging to any republic. But the deeper issue is not the unequal distribution of money and property, but the unequal distribution of knowledge. With apologies to T.S. Eliot – *Where is the knowledge we have lost in information? And where is the wisdom lost in knowledge?*

How are we educating ourselves? This is a large cultural question. And why? This is even a larger and more important question.

All children in the world receive an education every time they walk down their streets or ingest media. Truthfully, we all do. Metaphorically, the architecture, art and social media add to the conception of *streets*. Our contemporary street walking has narrowed our vision and broken our covenant (natural and sacred relationships) with the past and therefore, the future. Confining our vision to the here and now has also diminished our sense of community and has left us with a collective delusion built on a deep disrespect for religion, history, science and intellectual acuity. We have all become exceptional people because of our ability to construct personal realities filled with entitlements and devoid of personal responsibility. These are the ingredients of insanity.

Education, Society and Democracy

Any hope of surviving as a democratic republic/market economy anywhere in the world will depend on two elements: (1) our need to enhance our common learning and (2) our insistence that schools embrace the noble work of serving as a counterweight to the “street” education we and our children are receiving.

Education is the seed bed of every government. It is simply the case that a republic must rely on a different kind of learning, different commitments and different skills. Political philosophy tends to divide governments into three classifications: despotism, monarchy and republic. To survive, the dictator, plutocrat or other despot, must educate people into fearing the world, while the monarch relies on symbols and the teaching of chauvinism disguised as

honor. The republic is unique – it depends on a special or exceptional characteristic. A republic hangs on its ability to cultivate virtue in all its citizens. This is the insight that a republic will only survive if it invests in the educational resources necessary to create and preserve lives of virtue and self-sacrifice and operationalize the true meaning of one’s ethical and material infrastructure manifested in *E Pluribus Unum*. This democratic education produces the understanding that human beings, by definition, are all morally equal, as well as the understanding that systemic good can only be manifested through laws constructed by virtuous individuals, not by identity groups interested in superficial or skin-deep attributes.

While the moral trend of most of our history may have been in the right direction, the 21st century suggests a dangerous turnaround. Today, there is no guarantee that the will to create a more perfect world will continue. There is nothing in our personal DNA to make it so. A republic is always dependent on the current generation and the responsibility we take today for the future. That responsibility can only be realized through deep learning imbedded in our families, media, businesses and above all, in our education practices. In Thomas Jefferson’s first draft of the Declaration of Independence, he said “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of (PUBLIC) Happiness,” meaning that happiness was a function of community wealth (commonwealth), what we would now call the “ethical and material infrastructure.” While the individual must come to govern self in the republic, it is the commonwealth that develops virtue. While each ethical decision is personal, an individual cannot be moral alone. It does take the community to develop moral content and character. In the 18th century, this ideal became ubiquitous throughout the world. Today, not so much.

All of us, necessarily, must be educated into virtue by all the institutions of our culture, including our political ones, so we can become fit for the rule of law and fit to govern ourselves. The fundamental understanding and bedrock of any republic is virtue. This is the ability to put first things first. Such wisdom is best acquired through public instruction. This means instruction that is concerned not (just) with the notion of making one better off, but making one better, period. This is the education we once called “liberal.” This education is not training for career or vocational work, which plays to our baser instincts and motivations, but a general education of arts and sciences; religion; philosophy and literature; history; geography; languages; and political economy that will not only create and sustain the citizen, the culture and the economy, but will give life a point and purpose.



Conclusion

There's an old military understanding that says a great deal about one's respect of people. In a totalitarian society, the maps belong to the top officers and only to them. In a democratic society, every individual has access to the maps. In battle, the democratic mind knows that anyone might find themselves in a leadership situation. There's also a tacit expectation that every soldier/citizen will have the knowledge to understand and navigate the land or seascape. This goes to the meaning of the Athenian notion that warriors and philosophers must share the same attributes or we're left with cowards and fools. In fact, the foundation for democratic life is the discipline that challenges us to struggle with the **why** questions, regardless of calling.

To enhance our continuing discussion and guide educational content and practice in a more philosophical oriented direction, we might ask:

- What (why) is the proper relationship between the constitution or common law of the state (nation) and the character of its citizens?*
- What (why) is the proper relationship between self-interest and public interest?*
- What (why) is the relationship between forms of government and social economic class? Will a large, impoverished mass and a small elite generally produce oligarchy? Does greater equalization of wealth really favor democratic rule?*
- What (why) is the relationship between education and democracy?*
- What (why) is the relationship between the health of social institutions and the well-being of citizens?*
- What (why) is the relationship between the historical myths of individualism and the assumptions about the inclusive reality of life?*
- What (why) is the proper relationship between natural law and positive law?*

Why must an individual, claiming citizenship, be able to answer the question: "How shall I live my life?" Such questions can help us stop fragmenting our intellectual and cultural resources. When we fail to use these resources, our investigations soon fall into the quicksand of simple-minded answers to complex problems. In truth, can issues like war and peace; immigration; abortion; trade; environmental pollution; genetic engineering; and space exploration be intellectually discussed without reference to philosophical questioning? Can we even begin to address these issues without a careful study of the tensions between the public and private lives of the citizen? Between ethics and law? The study of how we come to wisdom is the necessary epistemology for democracy.

Michael Hartoonian is Associate Editor of Pegasus.

What's Worth Knowing

Richard D. Van Scotter

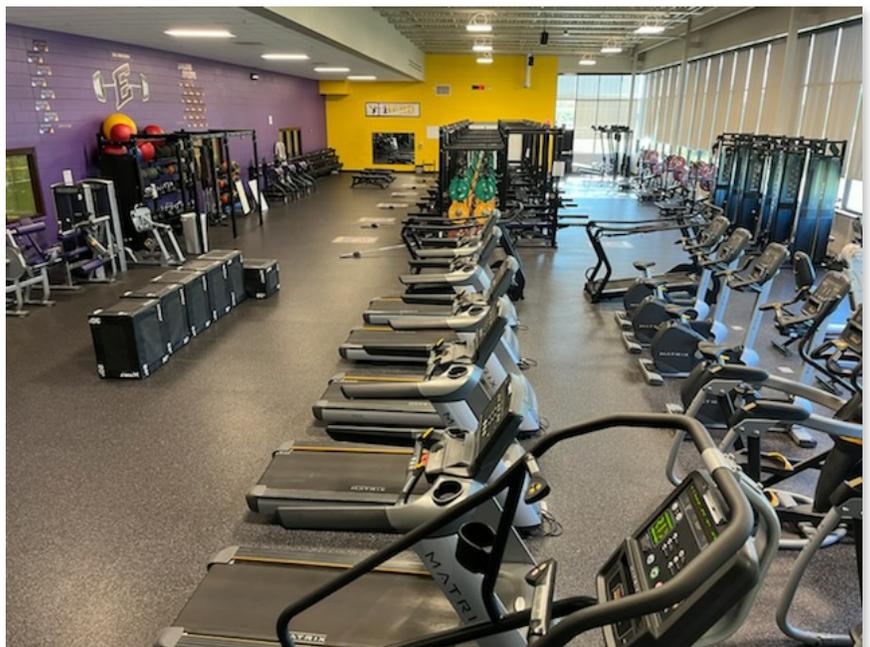
Sociologist and empirical researcher James Coleman, in his monumental study some years ago, observed that upon entering an American high school, one of the first things a visitor observes is the trophy case. “The gold and silver cups,” he remarked, “with rare exceptions, symbolize victory in athletic contests, not scholastic ones.... Altogether, the trophy case would suggest to the innocent visitor that he was entering an athletic club, not an educational institution.”

In some respects, not much has changed over the last half century. One thing at which American schools excel, in comparison to other nations, is to produce many of the world's finest athletes. These days, however, this well-established dimension of the school curriculum is receiving competition from technology instruction. Stroll the corridors of particularly more affluent high schools, as I have, and one can observe an impressive array of advanced technology.

Academic technology open labs are available across school campus, providing Mac and Windows computers. These technology labs can offer a wide range of technological facilities, including advanced video, audio, 2D and 3D modeling and animation, research and statistics, MS Office software and hardware, private editing suites and recording studio spaces with microphones and lighting gear and specialty scanners and graphic, modeling and fashion design applications. All this for the use and training of today's students.

Students also have entrée to “express stations” for checking email and web browsing, with access to software in computer labs. These facilities might remind one of the now obsolete vocational-technical, as well as agricultural workshops available to students several decades ago. The U.S. and much of the industrial world now are driven by advanced technologies.

Such labs and workshops often are the showpieces of American schools, along with the enhanced athletic facilities, spacious gymnasiums, superior playing fields, all-weather tracks and multi-faceted weight rooms to support the expansive number of sports programs for boys and girls, men and women.



Advanced technology, of course, is appropriate in our schools if students are to receive suitable school-to-work preparation for the modern economy. But to what extent is it needed and what is lost in the revitalization and transition?

Prevailing Illiteracy

As our nation becomes increasingly fragmented and divided, we should be reminded of and acknowledge the decline of civic education in our schools. Civic literacy, however, is not having students didactically memorize the branches of government, their respective functions, how bills are passed, the voting process and much more. Rather, it involves problem solving and critical thinking, when taught properly. The same holds for economics, geography, the physical sciences and history. Tests of literacy, conducted over time, for these subjects demonstrate that we really are a nation of ignorant citizens when it comes to fundamentally knowing how an informed democratic republic operates.

A great deal of valuable learning also is lost when schools neglect the humanities and literature because these are perceived as “soft” subjects in comparison to mathematics, the hard sciences and technology. What is lost, among other matters, is a realization that language and the arts are the most cherished gifts our culture offers and essential to a civilization.



The emphasis increasingly placed on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (or STEM) is in service to what can be called *economic utility*. As the name implies, economic utility holds a tacit belief in the market system, with its production and distribution of goods and services. At its core, it is utilitarian and essentially *training*. But training, by definition, is not *education*, whose principal meaning is “to lead out” and learning to reflectively think.

In turn, economic utility is closely associated with the concept of *consumerism*. If we are to produce more and more, the desire to consume can be compelling and driven by pervasive and persuasive marketing. An affliction we Americans confront is the specter of “hyper consumption” that leads to an assortment of personal and social grievances.

The pace of technology development affecting our lives has intensified over recent epochs and is especially commanding and disruptive in the 21st century. Its contributions to society are impressive, but the many technologies that have been introduced into our daily living also can be addictive. What we know about the television, automobile, computer, cell phone, internet, social media and much more is not just *how to use the technology, but how it uses us*. If this

were deliberately and effectively taught in our schools, pervasive technology curricula would better serve the individual and society.

The Liberal Arts

What holds for our K-12 curriculum also exists for most U.S. colleges and virtually all our universities. Over the past several decades, the liberal arts have atrophied and diminished, while schools of computer science, business management, communications, technology sciences, and medical technology have greatly expanded. Peruse any mega-university campus nowadays and you will find that the humanities, arts, music, literature and most social science departments occupy the “old campus,” while those devoted to modern, high technologies are housed in modern, advanced, upscale structures.

One rightly could conclude that our universities have become glorified vocational schools.

The rationale offered for this STEM emphasis is by now a familiar theme—the U.S. must keep up and preferably be ahead of our post-industrial competitors. Initially, we heard this battle cry about Germany and its impressive post-world war economic development. Then, we feared that the Soviets, as Nikita Khrushchev boasted, will “bury us” – economically, that is. Soon, thereafter, the Japanese, those producers of cheap goods, began making first-rate, high-quality cars, televisions, appliances and computers.



Now, it is China we fear will and may have surpassed us as the number one economic competitor in the global arena. The Chinese, over the course of just a few decades, have transformed its feudal economic society to an unabashed capitalist system. Yet, the Chinese make no pretense of being a democratic society. Their form of capitalism is brazenly authoritarian.

We seem to think that the humanities, philosophy and the arts are a nicety and luxury that the U.S. can ill-afford in the modern world. In some quarters of the media and corporate world, the study of the liberal arts is discouraged and even ridiculed.

So be it! With this, we will have abandoned our two and a half-century pursuit of being an

open, liberal, democratic republic. In a sense, this neglect is not unlike our reluctance to face the reality of climate change and global warming head on. Such is an imposition and distraction from maximizing revenue and profits.

We, the U.S., have essentially transformed our once rich culture into a crass, indulgent economy. The U.S. is a nation blessed with an expansive landscape and abundant natural resources, along with a steady flow of people eager to immigrate here and carry on the productive work ethic that has driven this nation since the mid-19th century.

We should not forget that the United States, above all other nations, is positioned to have both a vibrant democratic society in concert with a vigorous economic system. It's a matter of conscience and priorities.

Richard D. Van Scotter is a writer in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He has taught at Grinnell College and the University of Colorado at Boulder and Colorado Springs, as well as at Homewood-Flossmoor High School, Illinois. He is the author of Public Schooling in America and What Citizens Need to Know about Economics and the coauthor of Social Foundations of Education.

¹ *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, James S. Coleman, U.S. Department of Education, 1966. The Coleman Report, as it was known, was an extensive study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to assess the availability of equal educational opportunities available to children of different race, color, religion, and national origin.

Getting to the Bottom of Things

Charlie Mattioli

Why are humans, on average, good, rather than bad? Why do they choose to lead constructive lives, getting up in the morning to go to work and raising a family and building relationships instead of murdering and plundering?

According to historian Arthur Herman in his book, *How Scots Invented the Modern World*, these were the basic questions Adam Smith, Francis Hutcheson, Lord Kames, David Hume and other Scots tried to answer during the 18th century during the Scottish Enlightenment. They were on the cutting edge of developing the modern world and contemplating where free commerce, specialization, liberty and burgeoning technology would carry us. They saw, as Herman puts it, “The tension that runs through all of modern life and culture...a tension between what human beings ought to be and occasionally are and what they really are and generally remain.” He notes, “The great insight of the Scottish Enlightenment was to insist that human beings need to free themselves from myths and to see the world as it really is.” Their thoughts, analysis and predictions are worth looking at. Many of the institutions, democratic principles and economic ideas they pondered would cross the Atlantic and be fundamental influences in shaping this nation.

In brief, there were some men, like Hutcheson, whose starting point for those answers was the innate goodness he attached to human beings that could be refined and enriched by Christian virtue. For Kames, Hume, Smith and others, it was something more that tied more closely with reality. They saw men’s unbridled self-interest and passions and not rationality as the basis for human nature. Their answer to the questions above consisted of the following. It was society’s ability to channel those negative passions into constructive ones as a matter of convention and ingrained habit. It was humans wanting approval of their fellow man and the power of government to punish transgressions that were harmful and dangerous. It was a tension of balance between liberty, which preserves individuals and authority, which preserves society.

For Adam Smith, in particular, it was a fusion of both views. For him, society was the only mirror in which each individual could see himself. It was the human desire to please others and our ability to imagine being in another person’s place that was at the bottom of it. It was the unspoken Golden Rule of acting with each other so everyone would respect the happiness of one’s neighbor and therefore able to hold onto one’s own that stimulated the search for common ground in establishing civil and criminal laws to uphold that balance.

Liberty and commerce and refinement were the mechanisms they believed would bring the most benefits to the social order and improve mankind. The linchpin for Smith was the division of labor or to use our more modern vernacular, *specialization*. Specialization would

cause people to find ways to improve production and technology. It would stimulate improvement in quality and quantity. Cultural and human progress would follow. It was a rational calculation that self-interest, rightly understood, would follow and would foster the cooperation required for such interdependence.

But Smith also saw a systematic corruption flowing from commerce with its growing specialization. He saw individuals narrowing their focus and interests around their own smaller world, their job and their own financial situation. He saw these new concerns as taking people away from the larger picture and called it a “mental mutilation.” He wrote, “Commerce...sinks the courage of mankind and tends to extinguish the martial spirit; ...minds of men are contracted and rendered incapable of elevation.” He saw this deformity making workers cogs in an anonymous system and easy prey for those who sought to undermine their natural liberties. These were the cultural costs of capitalism. Smith saw that the only antidote to counter such costs were strong civic institutions, education being the most important.

Like all great cultures, the Scots were to fade as elitism grew. They began to think of their own culture as provincial and thus, imitated the English. Literature became more engrossed in fantasy and the sentimental caricature of the past overtook the realities of the present. Poverty remained a stubborn problem and self-interest, not rightly understood, consisted of making money. Anti-intellectualism became popular, entrepreneurism grew stale and university vigor waned. The once most literate nation in the world lost that standing.

Much of our country’s problems today are rooted in those same failings. Our valued principles become platitudes without the serious attention to those questions the Scots tried to answer. Technology has unbalanced what we look at, what we see and what we believe. Our lives are spent and coaxed to places and realities of the virtual, the vicarious, the voyeuristic and verisimilitudes.

Education, in particular, that civic institution Adam Smith so heavily hoped could counter the mental mutilation specialization brought, has, in many ways, exacerbated the problem by focusing on tests, failing to bring that “big picture” so sorely needed with raw integrity and its obsession with preparing the young for jobs, rather than citizenship. Perhaps starting with the purposes of government in a republic, eloquently expressed in our Constitution’s Preamble as a mirror and guide, we might better shape our schools’ goals, structures and curricula to the civic purposes, responsibilities and skills needed by its citizens. As a former teacher, my caveat is this: like Adam Smith, we place too much hope on an institution already overwhelmed by the shortfalls, politicization and problems of the culture and society in which it is embedded. Our tomorrows and our future belong to today’s youth. Their character and values are not merely inherited, but instilled, modeled and nurtured by family, church, community and culture.

Of course, the crux of all this is “what can we do about it?” Gloomy prognostications and salient facts seem to hit a wall as probable solutions. David Hume turned our high-held reliance on rationality on its head when trying to understand the answers to those basic questions. Human passions and desires play the fundamental role for our behavior. Rationality, in Hume’s phrase, is but the instrument to gain those passions—whether they be love, fear, hate, anxiety, greed or others. If we acknowledge that premise as true, then our situation is more akin to what Robert Pirsig, in his book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, called “value rigidity,” a refusal to let go of what stirs and holds us.

In his book, he relates a parable about the monkey trap used by a tribal group living in the jungle. Their trap was a hollowed coconut, tied securely to a tree trunk, with a hole in it and rice inside. Rice was the monkey’s favorite food. The hole was large enough for the monkey to get its hand in, but a fistful of rice made it impossible to get it out. So, the monkey reaches in and finds itself stuck. Soon, it hears the villagers coming near. It tries to flee, but remains trapped with a fistful of rice, which it’s unwilling to let go. Advice, rationality and facts have little effect on value rigidity, whether we are considering the monkey, a drug addict, the obese or the true believer. Pirsig insists one has to go fishing. That is, the monkey has to ask itself what’s really important, what matters most. It’s a very internalized, transformative process. It should be the eleventh commandment.

So, the real question we must deal with is, “How do you get folks to “go fishing?” Disasters, calamities, personal tragedies and such can be redemptive, but it is a costly way to learn. Too often, our reactivity is short-lived. Our fast-paced, distracted, diverse, fractured lives, with so many reality streams, make the stillness and inward exploration needed difficult. Our challenge is to find platforms and circumstances where we might see that common ground hidden in our differences and emotions, where there is the mirror that Adam Smith said we might see ourselves more clearly through our fellow humans and where, in an interplay of imagination, we can see ourselves in others and their situation to develop compassion and civic discussion and resolve.

We can never take for granted the ideas, principles and sacrifices of the past that has brought us to the present. Nor should we naively believe the past did not have its own blindness and problems. We can never presume all matters are settled, that the “what is right” is in our pocket, that progress comes without unintended consequences, that we can ride the momentum of our presumptions or that hope, which springs eternal, is enough. We do so at our own peril. We are, have always been and will always be tragic creatures of virtues and vices. As individuals and societies, our struggle is to be our best selves in meeting the challenges we face. As such, reverence and humility may be our most critical graces, as we struggle to make a more peaceful, just and compassionate world.

Charlie Mattioli is a retired secondary social studies teacher of 24 years in public education. He has served as clinical faculty at Purdue’s Ackerman Center for Civic Education and adjunct faculty in teacher training at the University of Alaska and East Tennessee State University.



Where is the Wisdom We have Lost in Knowledge?

Tom Abeles

Introduction

A child is born into the world with a new set of physical and cognitive systems with a variety of input and response potential. Depending where on the planet the child arrives, those systems begin being shaped by both the bio/physical and socio/economic environment. The systems respond in “give-and-take” feedback loops that determine the paths that all children make and take in life.

Like Alice going down the rabbit hole in Wonderland, there are many influencers, much like the posts and holes in a pinball machine, which change a person’s direction and even the path being pursued. The system has limited options for the player to control the path. Action taken may yield an immediate response or the effect not felt until far down the trail with a sudden sense of *déjà vu* and a latent response. The planet is a grid of geo/political boundaries. Each of these might be seen as a pinball machine, different, but with commonalities, where individuals move through their paths shaping their exit into a society. Depending on where an individual enters life, there are resources that offer more or fewer options. Where that person exits the game and how to participate in the larger community are functions of circumstance. Today, however, participation is largely shaped by the bio/physical and socio/economic matrix available in that environment, tempered by what the individual brings to the game. That quality of participation will depend on the quality of education.

Today, each student is confronted by systems of learning that are changing from a “pinball slap” to the limits of knowledge, skills and resources available. The arrival of a wired planet, the internet, penetrates the system across boundaries, K->grey. Riding on this “ether” are the matrices of artificial intelligence, still in their infancies. Given this expanding armamentarium, what will those faced with the current planetary situation do?

The Status

- 1) Approximately two decades ago, Johan Rockström and 28 scientists did an exhaustive study of the bio/physical condition of our planetary spaceship. They determined that there were 9 critical parameters that determined the survival of life on the planet. Figure 1 is equivalent to a set of gauges on a car. Of the 9, as of 2022, seven are in “overshoot” or read in the danger zone requiring immediate action of the occupants (1)
- 2) In 2015, the U.N. published a list of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2). These are mixed socio/economic and bio/physical. While not creating a precision set of gauges, the qualitative analysis suggests the idea of bio/physical “overshoot,” while pointing out that most of the socio/economic needs for the current occupants are in an “under shoot” condition.
- 3) Kate Raworth’s seminal publication, *Doughnut Economics*, provided two clear insights. The first is by reformulating the 2 models above as a “doughnut,” (3) which serves as a graphic instrument panel for the various critical elements. The second is a reformulation of how to think “like an economist,” stripped of philosophical dogmas (ism’s) and taking a pragmatic approach outside of accepted economic models from neoclassical to heterodox thought. (7 ways to think from 20th century economics to 21st century economics (4)).
- 4) Raworth has created the Doughnut Economic Action Lab (DEAL) (5). DEAL creates a community problem-solving, action oriented, information platform for individuals and groups to tackle the numerous socio/economic issues facing residents of the planet. It flows from the growing shift in how education, in general, is shifting from the pinball dystopian K->grey model that has been the standard didactic path for knowledge transfer/access.

Transition

Education, K->grey, has been dependent on the collection, development and curation of the world’s literature for formal learning in schools. This knowledge is found on the walls of prehistory to libraries and today, accessible at a key stroke in numerous electronic databases. One of the earliest to see opportunities in this area was Robert Maxwell, who consolidated academic journals and made them accessible for scholarly research. The work of Eugene Garfield, with his series of publications, such as current content for his Institute of Scientific Information, was regularly published lists of scholarly journals and their content as they were published. All these manually curated databases have been digitized and are available to students on smartphones and tablets, to professionals from law and policy centers and researchers across the socio/economic and scientific/engineering spectrum.

With the arrival of Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon Web Services and Microsoft, the digital world has been parsed into a series of specialized platforms (6) which cater to the public, at large. There are YouTube videos for entertainment to “how to” make, do, fix or create. With the advent of Zoom and other conferencing systems, the world is a new digital frontier. More

importantly, artificial intelligent systems, such as Alexa and Siri, are becoming librarians and large language models (LLMs) are turning science fiction chat bots into content providers and analysis. These systems can collate and analyze data, write “professional” articles and provide “advice” only dreamt when Weizenbaum created Eliza.

We are at a point in time where the role of the proverbial “sage on the stage” is changing right before our eyes. The boundaries between the world and the gated education systems are now permeable. If the planetary threats to the inhabitants from microbes to the top predator are to be addressed, there is no time for the linear education model to find a path forward, particularly for their future.

What is still well-formed in the K-16 levels, the sage-on-the-stage class lecture, is often coupled with discussion groups led by professors or assistants. Project-based learning is uneven across disciplines and the credit-based model, structured in standard modular bites, is based on institutional structures. Options are usually separated and often weakly linked to the college or university matrix. The structure impacts on both students and faculty and the measure of their competencies for graduation, promotion and tenure requirements.

Primary and secondary education, globally, are singularly tied to the present models, in part depending on the availability of finance, infrastructure and a variety of regulatory issues which bind a system with threads that are weakening, but are corseted, but which may be fraying at the edges. As noted in a previous article in *Pegasus* (7), there are significant advances in Artificial Intelligence’s LLMs. While in their infancy, they provide applications which can read, write/publish and interact with people in more than simple discourse.

The Tipping Point

Artificial Intelligence has a two-pronged development. At the “school” end, it starts around 1980. The publishing of Seymour Papert’s book, *Mindstorms*, is the iconic introduction to robotics and programming. Today, AI4K12.org is a center point for the direction. Much effort has/is being expended to develop age-appropriate curricula. At the other end, from an education perspective, numerous companies are providing curricula and full support to the K-12 community and beyond (8).

Today, with access to the world wide web, students are exposed to real opportunities which might be “unit”-based or be foundational for life-long engagement at many levels of individual skill and interest. Marc Prensky has started a searchable database where students can create their own paths of study and become involved without the boundaries of the class and subject based education system (9,10).

For example, the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 saw significant student presence, which has continued at many such conferences, leading to student activism internationally. As with a similar focus with 4-H programs in agriculture, students develop

projects which often lead to careers, from practices in farming, to involvement in policy advocacy and in international practices. Today, students from K->grey, in formal education or with organizations, have demanded and received a voice in their local community and international involvement, from environmental activism, to collaboration in skills development.

Where To

*Now I as fourfold vision see
And a fourfold vision is given to me
Tis fourfold in my supreme delight
And threefold in soft Beulahs night
And twofold Always. May God us keep
From Single vision & Newtons sleep*
-William Blake

The world wide web connects us horizontally across cultures and vertically across time. Artificial Intelligence becomes a complementary partner in education and not as a set of tools. It addresses Blake's concerns by partially shifting the cognitive and supplementing the socio/cultural skills of educators and amplifies those elements for learners. What is interesting and critical is that the world of finance (e.g., Wall Street) has recognized this at two levels, where ESG's focus is both within business and the relationship of business to the larger public.

Blake's "Single vision and Newton's sleep" has been tilted towards science and technology. Artificial Intelligence can restore the needed balance in both theory and practice. Both the U.N.'s SDGs and Raworth's doughnut model point to the need to reach a balance. New voices are gaining purchase in responding. Education is a life skill and voices, long silenced, are being heard across the spectrum, whether it is "treating the Earth like dirt" or communication across cultures. The "sorcerer's apprentice" may yet find the keys to rectify a profligate rampage.

*We shall nor cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*
— T.S. Eliot

In 1977, William Fawcett Hill wrote a slim book, *Learning Through Discussion*, which was supposed to be a guide for teachers on how to conduct a group discussion. Numerous other publications, drawing on this book, created lessons. Many academics understood that this model was constructed by analyzing various models. Unfortunately, reverse engineering does not work.

In the world immersed in the digital platform economy and increased global connectivity, categories or socio/economic models fail. The effort to mold practice into historic models, whether religious, social or economic, is equivalent to the ugly sisters attempting to fit their feet into Cinderella's slipper.

Dr. Tom Abeles is a professional futurist with a focus on renewable and sustainable resource technologies and policies. A former tenured academic, he has consulted in Asia, East Africa and Central America on issues ranging from education futures to agriculture.

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