



The Social Artist

Slow Down

Bureaucracy

Economists

Spring 2015

The SOCIAL ARTIST

(incorporating The SOCIAL CREDITER)

THE JOURNAL OF THE SOCIAL CREDIT SECRETARIAT

Quarterly Review for Economic Democracy

Spring 2015 Vol.3, No.1

ISSN: 2053-5236 (online 2053-5244)

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Front Cover Photograph: *Spring* by Frances Hutchinson

Typeset and printed by Imprint, Victory House, Dalton Lane, Keighley

Editorial

The London School of Economics, like similar institutes around the world trains economists to advise would-be politicians on money matters which they would not otherwise understand. Although ‘the economy’ is in the forefront of the minds of politicians, journalists and voters, very few people have more than a hazy idea as to what the economy is, what economists do, or why what it is, and what they do, matters. Some indication of the peculiarities of a phenomenon can be gleaned by a consideration of the jokes about it. And economist jokes are plentiful. Q. How many economists does it take to change a light bulb? A. None. They all assume it does not need changing.

It is said that a party of walkers, finding themselves lost on a mountainside, selected the economist amongst them to study the map and find their location. They waited eagerly as he turned the map this way and that, viewing the surrounding landscape. Finally he declared authoritatively, pointing to a mountain on the horizon: “Well, according to *this* map, we’re standing on that mountain over there.”

From these jokes it would appear unwise to trust the judgement of an economist on matters of any real importance. In the

mid-1990s the US Department of Labor set out quite a helpful statement of **What Economists Actually Do** (see page 3). From this we learn that economists “study the ways a society uses scarce resources such as land, labor, raw materials, and machinery to produce goods and services”. That is to say, economists provide politicians with the statistical data necessary to create a massive ‘tentacular bureaucracy’ manned by untold millions of waged and salaried slaves.

A brief glance at the Department of Labor document indicates that although all statistics, costs and benefits are measured in money terms, the word ‘money’ does not appear at all, and ‘finance’ appears in two lists, suggesting that ‘finance’ can be studied as a subject area in its own right, alongside agriculture, transport and so on. One is left wondering what exactly could be meant by ‘being concerned’ with the ‘practical application’ of ‘economic policy’ in the areas listed in the document. Are economists out there on the farm with the livestock? Piloting the aircraft? Hugging trees to protect the environment? Bringing up the children to join the labour force? What is economic policy, and where does it come from?

It is, in reality, no laughing matter. As Mark Taylor observes in his recent book *“Speed Limits: Where Time Went and Why We Have So Little Left”*, echoing Lewis Mumford seventy years ago, and William Cobbett before him, the effects of economic policies upon society and its natural infrastructures are bringing into serious question the viability of finance capitalism which currently dominates politics, the real-life economies of living systems, and the cultural life of city and countryside alike.

As the articles in *The Social Artist/Crediter* have shown over eight decades, the set of assumptions upon which practical policies have been based are proving to be untenable. A vast financial superstructure beyond the comprehension of all but professional economists, draws parasitically upon the gifted resources of households and the natural world. The vast supply lines of the “tentacular bureaucracy” so precisely described by Lewis Mumford all those decades ago, are proving financially, socially and ecologically unsustainable. Revision of the assumptions about how we get and spend our money is long overdue.

Fortunately, a whole raft of practical workable suggestions is currently emerging, combining tried and tested thought with realistic observation of present realities. A recent study¹ of a practical experiment in Chinyika, Zimbabwe cites Clifford Hugh Douglas:

“For Douglas, it would be possible to imagine a country, like Britain or Zimbabwe in which all inhabitants are regarded as shareholders in the birthright of the common property of real

wealth, consisting of untapped and renewable natural resources and the cultural heritage of tools and processes. That is, *each citizen has a claim to a share in the potential to produce, rather than being forced to participate in a system of production, distribution and exchange. The circulation of purchasing power can be made to reflect this situation through payment of a “dividend” on the shared cultural inheritance.* It is absurd to stipulate that in order to obtain an income, every individual should seek employment regardless of demand for their services and no matter what their health, capacity for employment or better judgment might dictate. Nevertheless, the proposal that all should have a small basic unearned income as a right is greeted by waves of shock and horror by many who are themselves bound in a wage-slavery system, as commonly prevails, indeed outside Chinyika, today.”

Calls for ‘dividend’ or ‘basic income’ are coming from many diverse quarters today. With a guaranteed citizen’s income of some kind, the employment of economists to confuse the issues would no longer be justified. We will then ask: How many folk singers does it take to change a light bulb? And the answer: Three, - one to change the bulb and two to lament the passing of the old one, - will be as things should be in a far saner world. Artists, farmers, carers, craftsmen, technicians and homemakers of all kinds will no longer need to say- but where’s the money going to come from? They will have time to focus on their work, once all those ‘day-jobs’ necessary to maintain the dying tentacular bureaucracy cease to exist.

¹ Quote from *Integral Community* by Ronnie Lessem

Money Creation and Society: debated in the House of Commons for the first time in 170 years, Thursday 20 November 2014. See <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/backbench-business-committee/news/mps-debate-money-creation-and-society/>

What do economists do?

US Department of Labor

Economists study the ways a society uses scarce resources such as land, labor, raw materials, and machinery to produce goods and services. They analyze the costs and benefits of distributing and consuming these goods and services. Economists conduct research, collect and analyze data, monitor economic trends, and develop forecasts. Their research might focus on topics such as energy costs, inflation, interest rates, farm prices, rents, imports, or employment.

Most economists are concerned with practical applications of economic policy in a particular area, such as finance, labor, agriculture, transportation, real estate, environment, natural resources, energy, or health. They use their understanding of economic relationships to advise business firms, insurance companies, banks, securities firms, industry and trade associations, labor unions, government agencies, and others. On the other hand, economists who are primarily theoreticians may use mathematical models to develop theories on the

causes of business cycles and inflation, or the effects of unemployment and tax legislation.

Depending on the topic under study, economists devise methods and procedures for obtaining the data they need. For example, sampling techniques may be used to conduct a survey, and econometric modeling techniques may be used to develop forecasts. Preparing reports usually is an important part of the economist's job. He or she may be called upon to review and analyze all the relevant data, prepare tables and charts, and write up the results in clear, concise language. Being able to present economic and statistical concepts in a meaningful way is particularly important for economists whose research is policy directed.

Economists who work for government agencies assess economic conditions in the United States and abroad and estimate the economic effects of specific changes in legislation or public policy. For

example, they may study how the dollar's fluctuation against foreign currencies affects import and export markets. Most government economists are in the fields of agriculture, business, finance, labor, transportation, utilities, urban economics, or international trade. Economists in the U.S. Department of Commerce study domestic production, distribution, and consumption of commodities or services; those in the Federal Trade Commission prepare industry analyses to assist in enforcing Federal statutes designed to eliminate unfair, deceptive,

or monopolistic practices in interstate commerce; and those in the Bureau of Labor Statistics analyze data on prices, wages, employment, productivity, and safety and health. An economist working for a state or local government might analyze regional or local data on trade and commerce, industrial and commercial growth, and employment and unemployment, and project labor force trends.

From the U.S. Department of Labor's 1994-95 Occupational Outlook Handbook, *Nature of the Work*

The Tentacular Bureaucracy

Lewis Mumford

What forces furthered this process of urban agglomeration? What made the metropolis the image of social hope and economic enterprise, even for those parts of the world whose dear ways of life were sapped and undermined by the extension of "la ville tentaculaire"? The means of agglomeration were the continental railroad lines and the worldwide lanes of ocean commerce: means which brought an endless flow of raw materials and foods into the metropolis: all roads led to the capital. But the civic force was the centralization of the organs of administration in the great capitals, and the growing dependence of every type of enterprise, political, educational, economic, upon the process of administration itself. Once the means of instantaneous

communication were available, there was a fresh incentive to concentrate the organs of administration: production could be controlled, the shipment of goods routed, orders given and canceled, credits extended and the exchanges of goods and drafts cleared, on a single spot. Remote control, first embodied in the separation of staff and line in the army, spread to business operations. With the manufacture of the typewriter in the seventies, and the coincident spread of high speed stenography, more and more business could be conducted on paper. Mechanical means of communication: mechanical means of making and manifold the permanent record: mechanical systems of audit and control—all these devices aided the rise of a vast commercial bureaucracy,

capable of selling in ever remoter territories.

The word bureaucracy had indeed become a discouraging by-word for inefficiency by the middle of the nineteenth century: Dickens needed no special powers of invention to create Sir Tite Barnacle and the Circumlocution Office. Everyone experienced, throughout the financial and political world, the difficulty of getting things done by direct action. The simplest civil act required legal sanctions, documents, verifications. From the searching of a deed up to the establishment of civil rights in marriage, no one could move without the aid of special functionaries. Lawyers, who knew the prescribed forms and technicalities, formed a large part of the growing professional population: their services were needed in the observance, and even more in the tactful breach, of the law. In all this development, the political bureaucracy served as a special target for chronic disparagement: it was supposed to have a monopoly of roundabout methods and a finicking attention to form. But the businessman's self-righteous indignation about the monstrous growth of political bureaucracy was extremely humorless. Such an attitude overlooked the fact that the *greatest development of bureaucracy during the last century took place within the realm of business itself*: this development put to shame the punier additions to the governmental bureaucracy. Plainly, no great corporate enterprise with a worldwide network of agents, correspondents, market outlets, factories, and investors could exist without relying upon the services of an army of patient clerkly routineers in the metropolis: stenographers, filing clerks,

and bookkeepers, office managers, sales managers, and their varied assistants, right up to the fifth vice-president whose name or o.k. sets the final seal of responsibility upon an action. The housing of this bureaucracy in office buildings and tenements and residential suburbs constituted one of the major tasks of metropolitan expansion: their transportation back and forth to work, within a limited time-span, raised one of the difficult technical problems that confronted the city planner and the engineer.

Not merely did the bureaucracy itself require office space and living space: but the by-products of its routine came to occupy an increasing share of the new quarters: files, vaults, places for live storage and dead storage, parade grounds and cemeteries of documents, where the records of business were alphabetically kept, with an eye to the possibility of future exploitation, future reference, future lawsuits, future contracts. This age found its form in a new type of office building: a sort of human filing case, whose occupants spent their days in the circumspect care of paper: numbering, ticketing, assorting, routing, recording, manifolding, filing, to the end that the commodities and services thus controlled could be sold to the profit of the absentee owners of the corporation.

A new trinity dominated the metropolitan scene: finance, insurance, advertising. By means of these agents, the metropolis extended its rule over subordinate regions, both within its own political territory and in outlying domains: directly or indirectly, they expedited the flow of tribute back into the big centers. Economic enterprise, political

power, social authority, once divided over the length and breadth of the land, now concentrated in the seven Romes. To obtain money, one must go to the metropolis: to exercise influence, one must achieve a prominent financial position in the metropolis. Here and there a lone wolf, like Henry Ford, would temporarily remain outside the system. But such isolation would be largely an illusion: mark how Ford himself, who once manufactured a car adapted to popular needs and rural life, finally succumbed to the lure of metropolitan style in the outer design of his car. Monopoly capitalism: credit finance: pecuniary prestige—these are the three sides of the metropolitan pyramid. Whatever goes on in the big city ultimately traces back to one or another of these elements. The metropolis is the natural reservoir of capital under this economic phase; for its banks, its brokerage offices, its stock exchanges, serve as a collecting point for the savings of the surrounding country, and in the case of world capitals, for the surplus capital of foreign investors. Investors and manufacturers both gravitate to the metropolis: the more constant the need for credit capital, the more important for the borrower to be close to the big banks that can advance it.

The concentration of financial power in national or semi-national banks, like the Banks of England and France, or in the hands of politically irresponsible private bankers, like the Houses of Rothschild and Morgan, is a characteristic feature of this regime. As Balzac clearly saw at the very beginning of this concentration, the banker was supreme: directly or indirectly, he manipulated the puppets

that appeared on the political stage: he contributed to the funds of the political parties, and his sanction was as necessary to the success of a political policy or an industrial invention as his veto was fatal. But mortgages on metropolitan real estate, whose values are “secured” by the continued prosperity and growth of the metropolis, become a mainstay of savings banks and insurance companies. In order to protect their investments, these institutions must combat any attempt to lessen congestion; for this would also deflate the values that are based on congestion. Note how the program for slum replacement and suburban re-settlement mapped out by the Roosevelt administration in 1933 was undermined by the fact that the administration created at the same time another agency whose sole purpose was to keep intact the existing structure of mortgages and interest rates: a policy that made it impossible to scale down sufficiently the grotesque burden of urban land values and urban debt.

In the medieval order, the fatalities and insecurities of life were offset by the organization of guilds and friendly societies. In the metropolitan regime, these services are performed by special financial corporations: insurance companies. Fire, flood, sickness, disability, accident, and death are all covered by one or another form of insurance. In the calculations made to ascertain the rates of insurance, the first advances in statistical sociology took place; and in intensive work toward health maintenance and disease prevention, great organizations like the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company

have demonstrated the cash value of improvement in these departments by education and medical aid.

Unfortunately, within the current metropolitan scheme, insurance is an attempt to achieve security by piling together at one point the maximum number of risks. In the short run, the insurance company may be solvent: in the long run, it becomes itself one of the elements contributing to the bankruptcy of the regime as a whole. By their control of vast capital resources, the insurance companies become the effective landlords of distant farming lands, as well as of metropolitan real estate. Remote farms in Arkansas and Iowa, rubber plantations in Brazil and power plants in Africa—these and a hundred other rural domains become directly tributary to the big city through the agency of finance. So long as the productive mechanism is in working order, the flow is continuous: but a drought, a dust-storm, an earthquake, a glut of commodities, or a war will seriously shake the fabric; and the existence of these implacable metropolitan claims may then stand in the way of rational political adjustment. Hence the necessity for completing the process of metropolitan monopoly and concentrating the control even further. To prevent aggressive rivalry on the part of sub-metropolises and their provinces one final step is necessary: the effective monopoly of advertising, news, publicity, periodical literature. These four departments have diverse points of origin and represent various initial interests; but historically, they have been loosely tied together since the beginning, and within the metropolitan framework they finally coalesce. They work to a single

end: to give the stamp of authenticity and value to the style of life that emanates from the metropolis. They establish the national brand: they attempt to control the national market: they create a picture of a unified, homogeneous, completely standardized population that bears, in fact, no relation to the actual regional sub-stratum—although in the course of time it partly succeeds in producing the thing it has imagined.

In all these efforts, the stage, the motion picture screen, the radio, no less than the newspaper and the printed book, concentrate upon fixing the national appetite upon just those products that the metropolis can sell at a profit. Similarly, they create an image of a valuable life that can be satisfied only by a ruthless concentration of human interest upon pecuniary standards and pecuniary results: the clothes of the metropolis, the jewels of the metropolis, the dull expensive life of Park Avenue and the Kurfurstendamm, Piccadilly and the Champs Elysées, become the goals of vulgar ambition.

Advertisement becomes the “spiritual power” of this new regime: ostentatiously or covertly, the greater part of the literature produced with the imprint of the metropolis is advertisement: an effort to establish the universal prestige of the metropolis, if not of this or that special product. Such methods, such standards, infect the older emblems of the spiritual power, the Church and the University: these institutions imitatively create huge ornate buildings, also in the spirit of advertisement, and are tempted grossly to copy the methods of the financier on whom they more and more rely. Example: the employment of commercial

fund-raisers on a share basis by the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York to acquire capital for the completion of its building. Such a concordat between the ecclesiastical and the financial powers has many parallels in the modern metropolis.

Where the organs of finance and publicity are concentrated, the possessing classes are likewise brought together; for the ritual of their life, as lived in public for the benefit of the illustrated newspapers and the newsreels, is an essential part of the pecuniary lure. The concentration of the rich is a typical metropolitan phenomenon: the wealth that they accumulate in the metropolis goes into private foibles and public philanthropies, when it does not return to commerce in the form of further investments.

The princely ritual of conspicuous expenditure, no longer confined to the royal court, gives rise to the special luxury industries of the metropolis: dress, food, adornment. Because of the universal nature of metropolitan standards, the exotic fashions of the rich are presently copied and reproduced on a mass scale for the benefit of the entire populace. As for the more altruistic modes of expenditure, some, like hospitals, are inherited from the past: some, like research foundations, are peculiar to the metropolitan economy itself: here, too, the millionaire of the new regime takes the place of the absolute prince.

In the second and third generations of money-making, philanthropy itself becomes a business of high repute. Just as about two hundred corporations control about half the industrial capital in America, so do a relatively small group

from the financial classes control the organs of culture in the metropolis and in a good part of the outlying territories. When new lines of activity are to be promoted in the arts and sciences, it is inevitably to the swollen purses of the metropolis that the promoters direct themselves: here, more often than not, the new foundation settles. Thus a multitude of associations of national and international scope naturally have their headquarters in New York, London, or Paris: charitable organizations, religious foundations, scientific and educational institutes. Here patrons and clients come together: here competitive patronage increases the opportunity for special interests to find support. A disproportionate share of power and influence and wealth has been drained away from the hinterland: in order to recapture any of these things, it is necessary for the provincial to leave his home and fight for a place in the metropolis.

A third condition abets the agglomeration of population. Victor Branford suggested that the growth of imperial bureaucracies, coming as a result of political centralization in war, was the characteristic agent that transformed the industrial town or caused it to yield in power and influence and numbers to the metropolis. War is the forcing-house of bureaucracy: in America, the Civil War and the World War, in Europe, the Napoleonic Wars, the Franco-Prussian War, the Russo-Japanese War, and again the World War. The fact is that imperialism and financialism go hand in hand: exploitation, whether external or internal, requires protection: the protection of the flag, the protection of

the military forces that march under the flag. As the population is heaped further into great centers, they must rely more fully upon distant sources of supply: widening the base of supplies and protecting the “life-line” that connects the source with the voracious mouth of the imperial metropolis, become the functions of the army and the navy. Whereas the agricultural base of the village is the local fields, and the base of the regional city is the local region, the base of the metropolis may be outside the political unit of which it is a member. In so far as it dominates those distant sources of goods and those distant markets, the growth of the capital can proceed indefinitely. Such an increase as London showed in a century, from one million to six million people, is unprecedented, so far as history offers any records for comparison; and it was dependent upon the worldwide transportation system and the worldwide system of capital investment and market-interchange that London had so vigorously helped to invent and knit together.

Beneath these tendencies toward centralization of power and agglomeration of people lies another economic fact. This is the increase of ground-rents that follows inevitably from such growth. In the metropolis the rent of land, no longer fixed by custom, no longer stabilized by slowness in change of use, rises by leaps and bounds. Parcels change rapidly from hand to hand, with successive increases in value, until they have “ripened” sufficiently to permit the fullest value to be plucked by the last owner who holds it just before its actual use. Under capitalism, the rise of

land values attendant upon congestion is by itself sufficient motive for—and justification of—the whole process. Do not fancy that this increase of values is incidental. On the contrary, strenuous efforts are made to ensure it. In Cobbett’s day, he complained about the effect of the funding system upon the overbuilding of London: the gathering of rentiers into the capital was a powerful factor in its expansion. But there are other means of effecting this end: railroad systems are deliberately designed to compel passengers and goods to pass through the metropolis before going elsewhere: each great capital sits like a spider in the midst of its transportation web. In America, in addition, as Thompson points out, the rate structure is not based upon the actual cost of service: the charges are arbitrarily equalized in such a fashion as to give a subsidy to the big cities at the expense of the rival towns that are perhaps more conveniently located—even though the cost of handling freight in big cities is, by reason of their very congestion, disproportionately high.

By itself, the big city becomes the prestige symbol for the whole civilization. Life in all the subordinate regions is sacrificed to its temples of pleasure and towers of pecuniary aspiration, as life in the Valley of the Nile was sacrificed to the theocratic cult of the tomb-builders. So much for the economist’s naive myth that the gigantic metropolis is what it is merely because of its tangible economic benefits or the natural superiority of its geographic situation.

Extract from Lewis Mumford *The Culture of Cities*, Secker & Warburg (1942 edition).

The Revival of Cobbett

G.K. Chesterton

Cobbett was *not* merely a wrong-headed fellow with a knack of saying the right word about the wrong thing. Cobbett was *not* merely an angry and antiquated old farmer who thought the country must be going to the dogs because the whole world was not given up to the cows. Cobbett was not merely a man with a lot of nonsensical notions that could be exploded by political economy; a man looking to turn England into an Eden that should grow nothing but Cobbett's Corn. What he saw was not an Eden that cannot exist but rather an Inferno that can exist, and even that does exist. What he saw was the perishing of the whole English power of self support, the growth of cities that drain and dry up the countryside, the growth of dense dependent populations

incapable of finding their own food, the toppling triumph of machines over men, the sprawling omnipotence of financiers over patriots, the herding of humanity in nomadic masses whose very homes are homeless, the terrible necessity of peace and the terrible probability of war, all the loading up of our little island like a sinking ship; the wealth that may mean famine and the culture that may mean despair; the bread of Midas and the sword of Damocles. In a word, he saw what we see, but he saw it when it was not there. And some cannot see it - even when it is there.

From G.K. Chesterton: *William Cobbett*, House of Stratus 1925 (2008 reprint), p5

Speed Kills

Mark C. Taylor

Speed was supposed to save time and make life better by leaving people with more leisure, but the faster we go, the less time we seem to have and the more fragmented and frenzied life becomes. If life is time, then to lose time is to lose life. Speed has a cost, a high cost – sometimes it even kills.

As acceleration accelerates, individuals, societies, economies, and even the earth that sustains us approach meltdown.

Faster is not always better. We have been conned into worshipping speed and craving the new by a financial system that teeters on the edge of collapse. Rather than improving life, acceleration creates

a pervasive sense of anxiety. Anxiety, unlike fear, has no definite object or source; it reflects a profound unease that results from insecurities that cannot be precisely identified and cannot be mastered. When caught in the throes of anxiety the future seems threatening rather than promising. The distraction of busyness becomes a temporary coping mechanism, but ultimately fails to solve the problem because that which is repressed always returns to haunt those who attempt to flee it.

When multitasking becomes a way of life, people are torn in many directions. And time is not all that is lost in the rush of life. With little or no time to spare, people lose touch with what once seemed to matter most – family, friends and the simple pleasures. With life spinning out of control, perhaps it is not surprising that a growing number of people have declared that enough is enough and are attempting to slow down.

In 1986, Carlo Petrini's protest against the opening of fast food giant McDonald's newest restaurant in the Piazza di Spagna, Rome, led to the creation of the slow food organization. Over the following years the Slow Movement, which encourages a slowing down of the pace of life, evolved.

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Extract from Mark C Taylor, *Speed Limits: Where Time Went and Why We Have So Little of It*, Yale University Press, October 2014 (p312-3).
Mark Taylor is Professor and Chair of the Department of Religion, Columbia University.

EDITOR'S NOTE: From Slow Food, Italy developed Cittaslow (Slow City) which had official communities in fourteen countries by 2009. The World Institute of Slowness carries the banner: "Most men pursue pleasure with such breathless haste that they hurry past it." The Slow Movement continues to expand so that it now includes: Slow Gardening, Slow Money, Slow Coffee, Slow Beer, Slow Parenting, Slow Travel, Slow Art, Slow Media, Slow Fashion, Slow Software, Slow Science, Slow Goods, Slow Church, Slow Counseling, Slow Education, Slow Revolution. Each group differs in its aims and interests. But all are united in resisting the cult of speed. Find out more via the internet – and fast!

"If major disasters from which there may be no recovery are to be avoided, it is necessary to act quickly – the addiction to speed must be broken with speed." Mark Taylor.

"...one of the primary principles in industrialism has always been to get the worker away from home. From the beginning it has been destructive of home employment and home economies. The economic function of the household has been increasingly the consumption of purchased goods. Under industrialism, the farm too has become increasingly consumptive, and farms fail as the costs of consumption overpower the income from production."

Wendell Berry, *The Agrarian Standard*, (2004)

"If we do not live where we work and when we work we are wasting our lives and our work too."

Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America*.

Choosing Freedom

Susan George

Most people haven't noticed yet but, except for a small minority, we're all in prison. The guards aren't stupid, they let us walk about freely in the sunshine and attend the movies of our choice, but, for many of the most important aspects of our lives, we are not free. *Whose Crisis, Whose Future?* casts a cold eye on the regime of neoliberal globalization under which we live and seeks to explain how we've been incarcerated. Finance governs our economy; finance and the economy together dictate a hugely unequal world; the most basic of all resources - food and water - are disappearing for hundreds of millions and the planet is mostly reduced to the status of an exploited quarry and rubbish tip; for all these reasons, we will continue to fight each other. The last and longest chapter here proposes concrete means and strategies of escape.

I wrote this book because I am angry, perplexed and frightened: angry because so many people are suffering needlessly on account of the economic, social and ecological crisis and because the world's leaders show no signs of bringing about genuine change; perplexed because they don't seem to understand or care much about the public mood, the widespread resentment and the urgency of action; frightened because, if we don't act soon, it may well be too late, particularly where climate change is concerned.

We could enjoy a world that is clean, green and rich, providing a decent and dignified life for everyone on a healthy planet. This is not some far-fetched Utopia but a concrete possibility. The world has never been so wealthy, and we have in our hands, right now, all the knowledge, tools and skills we need. The obstacles are not technical, practical or financial but political, intellectual and ideological. The crisis could provide an extraordinary opportunity to build such a world, and the aim of this book is to explain how and why we got into the present mess and how we can get out of it, to the benefit of the planet and of people everywhere. Although the financial part of the crisis has received the most attention and largely pushed the others off the front pages and the mental landscape, in reality we are in the midst not of a single crisis but of a multifaceted one, which already touches, or will soon touch, nearly every aspect of nearly everyone's life and the destiny of our earthly habitat. Call it a crisis of the system, of civilization, of globalization, of human values, or use some other universal, all-encompassing term; the point is that it has imprisoned us mentally and physically and we must break free.

Extract from *Whose Crisis, Whose Future?*
Pp1-2, Polity Press 2011

Living with intention

Maria Lyons

In 1913 Mahatma Gandhi wrote the following:

We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. This is the divine mystery supreme. A wonderful thing it is and the source of our happiness. We need not wait to see what others do.¹

The quotation is often shortened to the pithy imperative ‘Be the change you want to see in the world!’ Clearly, Gandhi was getting at something altogether more subtle and complex. Not only must change start with the individual, but the individual must acknowledge some responsibility for the way the world already is. In fact, when he wrote

these words Gandhi was speaking about how to reduce the fear and risk of snake bites. If a person is “unhealthy” venom spreads more easily through her blood and she succumbs, whereas if she has kept a healthy and wholesome diet she will not be affected. Similarly, if a person is angry, nervous or afraid, blood circulates more quickly and poison has a more immediate and potent impact than if she were calm and confident. Both serve as useful analogies for humanity’s response to the dangers and evils we perceive in the world. We minimise harm to ourselves not by “killing the snakes” but by altering our attitudes, habits and behaviour.

The same principle lies at the heart of Rudolf Steiner’s practice-based spiritual pathway, known as anthroposophy, or sometimes “ethical individualism”.

In its intention, anthroposophy is a contemporary example of what for the ancient Greeks was philosophy as a way of life; a question, that is, more of how one orientates oneself toward the world than how one formulates judgements about it. The “spiritual exercises” practiced by philosophers of old were rooted in an understanding that a “metamorphosis of our own personality” must go hand in hand with a metamorphosis of our own consciousness.² Steiner too advocated a lifelong and continually renewed quest for personal conversion, to counteract what for him was a specifically modern human tendency to externalise responsibility for both individual and social desiderata. This is a tendency which today manifests as an extraordinary faith in the power of systems, be they administrative, technical-scientific, political-ideological, or some combination of all three. The State, Kerler reminds us, can be neither ethical nor social, whatever its structures and intentions; for these are solely human qualities.³

As a form of response to social sickness then, the anthroposophical approach is one which rejects top-down, revolutionary reform and embraces what McKanan called the notion of “transformative presence”: the idea that “society changes when small groups of people begin living in a new way”.⁴ As students of Rudolf Steiner and deeply inspired by this outlook, Karl König and his colleagues began “living in a new way” when they came together as the first Camphill community in Scotland in 1940. While the circumstances of its

birth and history have meant Camphill communities have become known – and often self-identify – as therapeutic communities for people with intellectual disabilities, the original intention was a social healing that went beyond the needs of these individuals, pressing though they were and remain. As Jewish refugees from Hitler’s Europe, the first “Camphillers” were tragically familiar with the end result of ideologies that deny both the value of outer nature and the meaning of inner humanity.

König developed a vision of a “learning community” where the traditional boundaries between professional disciplines would be dissolved; where the spiritual well-being of those living in the community would be nurtured and respected; where creativity, spontaneity and originality would be encouraged; and, where ecological sensitivity and responsibility would be exercised. He was looking at one possible way to generate social renewal at a time of social disintegration and to send a message of hope at a time of universal despair.⁵

For König, the starting point for healing was again a question of intention, for it lay in the formation of meaningful and reciprocal relationships – the “eye to eye [or I to I] meeting of two persons”.⁶ The principle of reciprocity has thus been fundamental to Camphill communities from the outset, and is reflected in living, working and financial arrangements designed to enhance experiences of equality, belonging and co-dependency. “Pupils, students, villagers and older residents live together with co-workers [volunteers] and their families in such

a way as to foster mutual help and understanding. Helper and helped live side by side, each learning from the other”⁷

It is an ongoing commitment to and daily practice of mutual recognition which, according to Christie, prevents residential communities from developing the rigid and dehumanising characteristics of ‘institutions’. Shared tasks, shared spaces and most importantly, shared *homes*, minimise the differences between ‘able’ and ‘disabled’. A conscious de-coupling of work from financial reward not only allows for ‘helper’ and ‘helped’ to move from contractual to friendship-based relationships, but influences the quality of interaction among all members of the community: “Persons can be evaluated – and evaluate themselves – according to what they do and how they do it, not according to what sort of money it brings”.⁸ For Christie it is specifically the fact that members of Camphill communities view their responsibilities as a vocation or ‘way of life’ rather than a ‘job’ that creates the context for people to be celebrated as individualities and not identified purely with their abilities or disabilities. A defining feature of institutional life is its conformity to an ultimate purpose or grand plan, be it treatment, rehabilitation, education, or profit-making. In so far as people gather in the Camphill village not to be cared for, treated, housed, educated or employed, but to *live*, life, in all its complexity, is the main purpose and business of the community. It is this multiplicity of purpose – or holism - which distinguishes a ‘community’ from an ‘institution’.

Today the network of Camphill communities has spread throughout the world, with over 100 locations in 25 countries. It has already been noted in these pages that, while new initiatives are being enthusiastically pioneered on the far off continents of Africa and Asia, well-established communities here in the UK are going through turbulent times. Part of this can be explained in terms of external factors. As care settings, Camphill places are increasingly under pressure to fall in line with the current political grand plan for what is perceived as social progress. ‘Progress’ in this context, and to put it rather crudely, means people with disabilities living ordinary lives in ordinary neighbourhoods, getting ordinary qualifications and doing ordinary (i.e. paid) jobs, and associating with ordinary (often employed) people. Clearly, the extra-ordinary way of life Camphill’s pursue is in tension with the formalising and standardising forces affecting all social, health, educational and working environments today. It is true too, however, that part of Camphill’s difficulties lies in discord and differences within communities; perhaps it can be described as a loss of the experience of a common intention, and the ongoing struggle to re-evaluate and re-discover it.

Here is not the place to explore that struggle, but rather to emphasise that the relevance of Camphill and other intentional community movements today are not only in their being an alternative to de-humanising and de-personalising institutions, but in their capacity to continue to be a counterbalance to a de-humanising and de-personalising society.

The experiences of many individuals with special needs living in ordinary society merely highlights broader tendencies which can be described as both anti-social and anti-individual. For many today, ordinary lives mean socially fragmented or isolated ones, where relationships are increasingly mediated through information technologies rather than “I to I” meetings, where communities are collections of strangers connected only by geography, where work is ‘activity done for money’ rather than personal interest, vocation or service, where learning is narrowly defined and intensely regulated rather than creative and personally transforming. In short, the “threats to our inner humanity” that König responded to are ever-present. “The reality of disability is that it cuts through the myths we weave around ourselves”, its “gift” is that it “presents each of us individually, and society as a whole, with an opportunity to respond to another person’s needs with decency”.⁹

As a movement Camphill is in a somewhat paradoxical situation: their engagement with a recognised social need means its communities have more permeable boundaries than most intentional communities, and thus greater potential to be a “transformative presence” in the world. At the same time it is this very engagement, coming as it does with statutory obligations and the

need to be publicly accountable, which makes them particularly vulnerable to regulatory pressures which threaten to alter or undermine their intention. Gandhi’s words remind us that in negotiating this tension – as perhaps we all must – the attitude of the world towards us is influenced by the extent to which we have the courage of our own convictions. To look to one’s own inner health does not mean to withdraw from the world; on the contrary, it is only when we have health at home that we can seek to be an example to others. Beyond the principle of “being change” the most important conviction shared by the founders of Camphill was that it is impossible to behave with genuine decency towards another human being unless one is doing it freely. The essence of “ethical individualism” is the idea that only the free act can be moral, and as such it is an attempt to expose as false the dichotomy between individual and social good. In so far as people come together with this intention, perhaps, they are inviting the wider world to develop a new understanding of community.

Maria Lyons is founder of the Camphill Research Network, which collates, disseminates and promotes research related to Camphill and other intentional communities. For more details or to join the network please visit www.camphillresearch.com or contact maria.lyons@camphillresearch.com.

¹ Mahatma Gandhi, *The Collected Works (Electronic book)*, Publications Division Government of India, New Delhi, 1999 (p.241).

² P. Hadot and A. Davidson, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*: Blackwell, 1995 (p.82).

³ Rolf Kerler (nd) *What Keeps the Social Organism Healthy?* Weleda (ISBN: 3-937400-03-6)

⁴ Dan McKanan, *Touching the World: Christian Communities Transforming Society*, Liturgical Press, 2007 (p.33).

⁵ Robin Jackson The Camphill Movement: The vision of Karl Koenig, *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*: Vol. 19, Issue 3 (p.45).

⁶ König cited in McKanan (p.19).

⁷ Leonardo Fulgosi in Stanley Segal, *No Child is Ineducable*. UK: Pergamon Press, 1990 (p.40)

⁸ Nils Christie, *Beyond Loneliness and Institutions: Communes for extraordinary people*, Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1990

⁹ Simon Duffy, *A Fair Society and the Limits of Personalisation*, Centre for Welfare Reform, March 2011. (p.4)

Book Reviews

Speed Limits: Where Time Went and Why We Have So Little Left

by *Mark C. Taylor*

Yale University Press

408pp £18.99

ISBN: 978-0-300-20647-0

The message of this aptly titled book is “Slow Down NOW!” Philosopher Mark Taylor has undertaken to research the interplay between economic growth, extreme competition and ever accelerating technological innovation. He shows how the speed of change is inexorably resulting in environmental degradation, as “choice, waste and debt” have become the sole determinants of social, economic and political policy.

This groundbreaking text analyses the motives of the human agents using the stream of information flowing from technological developments to participate in a vast financial casino, demonstrating that the world economy is governed by an artificial intelligence driven by greed, impervious to moral and ethical considerations, and beyond conscious control. Taylor describes as toxic the very speed of change. The globally wired financial markets “represent postmodernism on steroids”, as “signs that are grounded in nothing beyond themselves” circulate in global networks “at the speed of light”.

“Rather than being established by its relation to a real commodity, product

or asset like inventory, a factory or real estate, the value of the monetary sign in financial capitalism is determined by its relationship to other financial signs like currencies, options, futures, derivatives, swaps, collateralized mortgage obligations (CMOs), Bitcoins, or countless so-called financial innovations. ... Financial markets have become almost completely detached from the real economy.” (236)

In this descriptive masterpiece, the author documents developments in religion, philosophy, art, fashion and finance dictated by the uncritical obsession with speed generated by blind faith in the market of global finance capital.

“Speed has become the measure of success – faster chips, faster computers, faster networks, faster connectivity, faster news, faster communications, faster transactions, faster delivery, faster product cycles, faster brains, faster kids, faster lives. According to the gospel of speed, the quick inherit the earth.” (p1)

Why is this happening? What are the effects upon the real lives of real people and the planet which supports all life on earth? And what can be done to forestall the otherwise inevitable “social, political, economic, financial, physical, psychological and ecological meltdowns” predicted by a host of thoroughly on-the-ball authors cited in this work?

Once upon a time, time was grounded in the seasons which changed as the earth revolved. As day followed night there was a time to sow and a time to reap, a time to work and a time to rest. God was in heaven and all was well on Earth. Now it is the market that knows best. Blind faith in God has been replaced by blind faith in the market: “greed is good because the omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent market always creates profit out of self-interest.” (p56) Following the teachings of Milton Freedman and Frederick Hayek, time is ritually sacrificed for money. However, the financial assets which are circulating in global networks at the speed of light are grounded in nothing real.

The technologies of the industrial revolution created the mass production of goods, necessitating mass consumption through the mass marketing of goods, necessitating the mass advertising, mass wholesale and mass transportation of goods designed to become obsolescent. The shift is now to mass customization, made possible by four technological innovations: “super high-speed, low-cost computing, super high-speed algorithmic data-processing capabilities; the cloud for storage of massive amounts of information; and what is widely labelled ‘big data’.” (p192) Every second more data now crosses the internet than was stored in the entire internet just two decades ago. These developments make it possible to track and target consumers with products designed for their individual interests and tastes. In short, individuals are skilfully processed into a virtual world which has them buying more and more consumer goods in a

frantic effort to achieve an ever-more elusive satisfaction. The result is literally mind-numbing. “The faster we go, the more we forget, and the more we forget, the less we know who we are or where we are going.” (p345)

As an academic late in his career, Taylor draws upon his lifetime experience of the teaching and study of philosophy. He illustrates the mind-numbing effects of the substitution of Google, Wikipedia and other on-line tools for sustained, though time-consuming, study of demanding texts in their original format. Having learned Danish in order to study Kierkegaard in the original, the author is well-placed to demonstrate the present-day relevance of the teachings of the philosopher born two centuries ago. In a key chapter entitled “Reprogramming Life – Deprogramming Minds” Taylor argues that individuals must accept personal responsibility for the person they become through their own decisions. It is not enough to respond like Pavlovian dogs to the stimuli of mass market culture, or to absorb unthinkingly the outdated institutional framework of their upbringing. The time has come for individuals to take fully conscious personal responsibility for whatever hand life has dealt them. With Kierkegaard, the author argues that: “Individuals ... are radically free and completely responsible for their lives:

“While people are conditioned by their natural abilities: the circumstances of their birth; and the social, political and economic conditions of their time, they must, nonetheless, self-consciously acknowledge who they are and take full

responsibility for the person they become through their own decisions.” (p296)

Speed Limits cannot be dismissed as a quick and easy read. This erudite volume is the product of years of research, not only by the writer himself but also, as he documents, by key authorities in philosophy, economics, technology, theology, fashion and finance. A tension runs throughout the book – and it is one echoed by so many over the past decades

– that speed is essential if financial, ecological and social meltdown are to be avoided. The message of this reviewer, to all who read this review, is: take time out NOW from whatever seems pressingly urgent and read the book itself. This review can only serve as an introduction to a major contribution to the ability of humanity to forestall meltdown in the not-so-distant future.

Frances Hutchinson

Cry of Wonder

by *Gerard W Hughes*

Bloomsbury Publishing 2014

336pp £12.08

ISBN 978-1-4729-1040-0

The author of this book died shortly after it was published, at the age of 90. Whilst it is not a conventional autobiography, Hughes draws heavily on his own life throughout, and gives us a candid insight into his personal spiritual journey. At the same time, he invites his readers to embark on an equivalent journey, guiding us with the benefit of his own extensive experience. It thus serves as a fitting epitaph to a priest whose own faith was constantly evolving and developing. It also continues his legacy of many decades of spiritual guidance through teaching, writing and leading retreats.

Candour is certainly a hallmark of Hughes's life and writing; indeed he could fittingly be described as a 'turbulent priest'. Despite having been a Jesuit for 70 years he is perfectly willing to lay bare his own difficulties with the narrowness of Church teaching, clericalism, and the suppression of

critical thinking. He writes in a clear and lucid prose which on occasions becomes lyrical, and although a very learned Catholic theologian, he writes in a way that will be accessible to the general reader, of all faiths and none

The author's willingness to question Church teachings and authority made for an eventful life. As Catholic Chaplain of Glasgow University he was sacked twice, once for questioning Church teaching on contraception, and again when the Archbishop heard he had given communion to non-Catholics. On both occasions he retained the support of the Jesuits and he was reinstated.

When he was teaching religion at the exclusive Catholic college Stoneyhurst, a boy confronted him and told him that he was wasting his time, because half the class were atheists. His response was probably not what the boy expected. He accepted and respected his view, and began a discussion which led to the foundation of the Agnostics Club, where the existence of God and other questions were debated. He refused to adopt the role of a religious enforcer, trying to

ensure that Catholic students bowed to the authority of the Church. He believed that ‘the exercise of our critical faculty is essential for the development of true faith because it is the means by which the individual can assimilate the truth’ and ‘Neglecting this gift of criticism reduces faith to an enforced assent to beliefs imposed on us by others.’

This willingness to respect the views and experiences of others is coupled with a strong desire that all people should learn to reflect on and value their own experience, ‘the only reliable source on which any of us can draw when asking the all-important ‘why’ questions of life.’ To assist his readers in doing this, at the end of each chapter there is a simple exercise or question to allow the reader to reflect on their own reaction to what they have read. At the beginning of the book there are a few pages of simple instruction on how to be still, reflect and pray.

The three themes of the book are Unity, Peace and Holiness. In addressing these, Hughes laments the distinction which is so often drawn between the natural, (our lived experience, which is frequently disregarded as unimportant) and the supernatural, spiritual life regarded as superior and more important. Hughes deplores this split which he believes gives rise to many of our problems. It results in God being confined to the religious realm and banned from ordinary life. As Hughes says, ‘We prefer God to be like that, not interfering in any way with the things that really matter, like our economy, our national defence, our foreign policy, trade agreements....’ If we

allowed God to be in all these things, the world would be a very different place.

In arguing against the split between the natural and supernatural, practical and spiritual, Hughes, perhaps surprisingly, cites the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. ‘He had no theological or spiritual qualifications. He was an ill-instructed layman, with a strong streak of the fictional Don Quixote in him and also a strong streak of violence. He is not attempting a treatise on spirituality: he is writing from his own, very raw, felt experience.’

As the world seems to be in danger of becoming ever more divided along religious and cultural lines, and as the media seems frequently to highlight and so widen these divisions, we need the message of this book, a message of unity and peace, rooted in the belief that, ‘The truth of the matter is that the heart of all religion and prayer is not about our religious performance, but about God’s very Self dwelling in and being at home in the heart of every single human being and in all creation. This is the heart of Unity, the essence and the ultimate identity of every single human being without exception.’

When we understand this, and perhaps more importantly, feel this, then division and war will simply not be an option.

Bernadette Meaden writes on political and social issues, and currently blogs for *Ekklesia*, the beliefs and values think tank. <http://www.ekkleisia.co.uk/blog/1251>

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The Social Artist

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Joseph Beuys *What is Money? A Discussion*, Clairview Press, 2010.

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