

FRIENDS OF WISDOM

NEWSLETTER

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WHAT IS WRONG WITH SCIENCE? Preface to the Second Edition.

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This book spells out an idea that just might save the world. It is that science, properly understood, provides us with the methodological key to the salvation of humanity.

A version of this idea can be found buried in the works of Karl Popper. Famously, Popper argued that science cannot verify theories, but can only refute them. This sounds very negative, but actually it is not, for science succeeds in making such astonishing progress by subjecting its theories to sustained, ferocious attempted falsification. Every time a scientific theory is refuted by experiment or observation, scientists are forced to try to think up something better, and it is this, according to Popper, which drives science forward.

Popper went on to generalize this falsificationist conception of scientific method to form a notion of rationality, *critical rationalism*, applicable to all aspects of human life. Falsification becomes the more general idea of *criticism*. Just as scientists make progress by subjecting their theories to sustained attempted empirical falsification, so too all of us, whatever we may be doing, can best hope to achieve progress by subjecting relevant ideas to sustained, severe *criticism*.



By subjecting our attempts at solving our problems to criticism, we give ourselves the best hope of discovering (when relevant) that our attempted solutions are inadequate or fail, and we are thus compelled to try to think up something better. By means of judicious use of criticism, in personal, social and political life, we may be able to achieve, in life, progressive success somewhat like the progressive success achieved by science. We can, in this way, in short, learn from scientific progress how to make personal and social progress in life. Science, as I have said, provides the methodological key to our salvation.

I discovered Karl Popper's work when I was a graduate student doing philosophy at Manchester University, in the early 1960s. As an undergraduate, I was appalled at the triviality, the sterility, of so-called "Oxford philosophy". This turned its back on all the immense and agonizing problems of the real world –

the mysteries and grandeur of the universe, the wonder of our life on earth, the dreadful toll of human suffering – and instead busied itself with the trite activity of analysing the meaning of words. Then I discovered Popper, and breathed a sigh of relief. Here was a philosopher who, with exemplary intellectual integrity and passion, concerned himself with the profound problems of human existence, and had extraordinarily original and fruitful things to say about them. The problems that had tormented me had in essence, I felt, already been solved.

But then it dawned on me that Popper had failed to solve his fundamental problem – the problem of understanding how science makes progress. In one respect, Popper's conception of science is highly unorthodox: all scientific knowledge is conjectural; theories are falsified but cannot be verified. But in other respects, Popper's conception of science is highly orthodox. For Popper, as for most scientists and philosophers, the basic aim of science is knowledge of truth, the basic method being to assess theories with respect to evidence, *nothing being accepted as a part of scientific knowledge independently of evidence*. This orthodox view – which I came to call *standard empiricism* – is, I realised, *false*. Physicists only ever accept theories that are *unified* – theories that depict the same laws applying to the range of phenomena to which the theory applies. Endlessly many empirically more successful *disunified* rivals can always be concocted, but these are always ignored. This means, I realised, that science does make a big, permanent, and highly problematic assumption about the nature of the universe independently of empirical

considerations and even, in a sense, in violation of empirical considerations – namely, that the universe is such that all grossly *disunified* theories are false. Without some such presupposition as this, the whole empirical method of science breaks down.

It occurred to me that Popper, along with most scientists and philosophers, had misidentified the basic aim of science. This is not truth per se. It is rather truth *presupposed to be unified*, presupposed to be explanatory or comprehensible (unified theories being *explanatory*). Inherent in the aim of science there is the metaphysical – that is, untestable – assumption that there is some kind of underlying *unity* in nature. The universe is, in some way, physically comprehensible.

But this assumption is profoundly problematic. We do not *know* that the universe is comprehensible. This is a conjecture. Even if it is comprehensible, almost certainly it is not comprehensible in the way science presupposes it is today. For good Popperian reasons, this metaphysical assumption must be made explicit within science and subjected to sustained *criticism*, as an integral part of science, in an attempt to improve it.

The outcome is a new conception of science, and a new kind of science, which I called *aim-oriented empiricism*. This subjects the aims, and associated methods, of science to sustained critical scrutiny, the aims and methods of science evolving with evolving knowledge. Philosophy of science (the study of the aims and methods of science) becomes an integral, vital part of science itself. And science becomes much more like natural philosophy in the

time of Newton, a synthesis of science, methodology, epistemology, metaphysics and philosophy.

The aim of seeking *explanatory truth* is however a special case of a more general aim, that of seeking *valuable truth*. And this is sought in order that it be *used* by people to enrich their lives. In other words, in addition to metaphysical assumptions inherent in the aims of science there are *value* assumptions, and *political* assumptions, assumptions about how science should be used in life. These are, if anything, even more problematic than metaphysical assumptions. Here, too, assumptions need to be made explicit and critically assessed, as an integral part of science, in an attempt to improve them.

Released from the crippling constraints of standard empiricism, science would burst out into a wonderful new life, realising its full potential, responding fully both to our sense of wonder and to human suffering, becoming both more rigorous and of greater human value.

And then, in a flash of inspiration, I had my great idea. I could tread a path parallel to Popper's. Just as Popper had generalized falsificationism to form critical rationalism, so I could generalise my aim-oriented empiricist conception of scientific method to form an aim-oriented conception of rationality, potentially fruitfully applicable to all that we do, to all spheres of human life. But the great difference would be this. I would be starting out from a conception of science – of scientific method – that enormously improves on Popper's notion. In generalizing this, to form a general idea of progress-achieving

rationality, I would be creating an idea of immense power and fruitfulness.

I knew already that the line of argument developed by Popper, from falsificationism to critical rationalism, was of profound importance for our whole culture and social order, and had far-reaching implications and application for science, art and art criticism, literature, music, academic inquiry quite generally, politics, law, morality, economics, psychoanalytic theory, evolution, education, history – for almost all aspects of human life and culture. The analogous line of argument I was developing, from aim-oriented empiricism to aim-oriented rationalism, would have even more fruitful implications and applications for all these fields, starting as it did from a much improved initial conception of the progress-achieving methods of science.

The key point is extremely simple. It is not just in science that aims are profoundly problematic. This is true in life as well. Above all, it is true of the aim of creating a good world – an aim inherently problematic for all sorts of more or less obvious reasons. It is not just in science that problematic aims are misconstrued or “repressed”; this happens all too often in life too, both at the level of individuals, and at the institutional or social level as well. We urgently need to build into our scientific institutions and activities the aims-and-methods-improving methods of aim-oriented empiricism, so that scientific aims and methods improve as our scientific knowledge and understanding improve. Likewise, and even more urgently, we need to build into all our other institutions, into the fabric of our personal and social lives, the aims-and-methods-improving methods of aim-

oriented rationality, so that we may improve our personal, social and global aims and methods as we live.

One outcome of the 20th century is a widespread and deep-seated cynicism concerning the capacity of humanity to make real progress towards a genuinely civilized, good world. Utopian ideals and programmes, whether of the far left or right, that have promised heaven on earth, have led to horrors. Stalin's and Hitler's grandiose plans led to the murder of millions. Even saner, more modest, more humane and rational political programmes, based on democratic socialism, liberalism, or free markets and capitalism, seem to have failed us. Thanks largely to modern science and technology, many of us today enjoy far richer, healthier and longer lives than our grandparents or great grandparents, or those who came before. Nevertheless the modern world is confronted by grave global problems: the lethal character of modern war, the spread and threat of armaments, conventional, chemical, biological and nuclear, rapid population growth, severe poverty of millions in Africa, Asia and elsewhere, destruction of tropical rain forests and other natural habitats, rapid extinction of species, annihilation of languages and cultures. And over everything hangs the menace of climate change, threatening to intensify all the other problems (apart, perhaps, from population growth).

All these grave global problems are the almost inevitable outcome of the successful exploitation of science and technology plus the failure to build aim-oriented rationality into the fabric of our personal, social and institutional lives. Modern science and technology make

modern industry and agriculture possible, which in turn make possible population growth, modern armaments and war, destruction of natural habitats and extinction of species, and global warming. Modern science and technology, in other words, make it possible for us to achieve the goals of more people, more industry and agriculture, more wealth, longer lives, more development, housing and roads, more travel, more cars and aeroplanes, more energy production and use, more and more lethal armaments (for defence only of course!). These things seem inherently desirable and, in many ways, are highly desirable. But our successes in achieving these ends also bring about global warming, war, vast inequalities across the globe, destruction of habitats and extinction of species. All our current global problems are the almost inevitable outcome of our long-term failure to put aim-oriented rationality into practice in life, so that we actively seek to discover problems associated with our long-term aims, actively explore ways in which problematic aims can be modified in less problematic directions, and at the same time develop the social, the political, economic and industrial *muscle* able to change what we do, how we live, so that our aims become less problematic, less destructive in both the short and long term. We have failed even to appreciate the fundamental need to improve aims and methods as the decades go by. Conventional ideas about rationality are all about *means*, not about *ends*, and are not designed to help us *improve* our ends as we proceed. Implementing aim-oriented rationality is essential if we are to survive in the long term. To repeat, the idea spelled out in this book, if taken seriously, just might save the world.

Einstein put his finger on what is wrong when he said "Perfection of means and confusion of goals seems, to my opinion, to characterize our age." This outcome is inevitable if we restrict rationality to *means*, and fail to demand that rationality – the authentic article – must quite essentially include the sustained critical scrutiny of *ends*.

Scientists, and academics more generally, have a heavy burden of responsibility for allowing our present impending state of crisis to develop. Putting aim-oriented rationality into practice in life can be painful, difficult and counter-intuitive. It involves calling into question some of our most cherished aspirations and ideals. We have to *learn* how to live in aim-oriented rationalistic ways. And here, academic inquiry ought to have taken a lead. The primary task of our schools and universities, indeed, ought to have been, over the decades, to help us learn how to improve aims and methods as we live. Not only has academia failed miserably to take up this task, or even see it as necessary or desirable. Even worse, perhaps, academia has failed itself to put aim-oriented rationality into practice. Science has met with such astonishing success because it has put something like aim-oriented empiricism into scientific practice – but this has been obscured and obstructed by the conviction of scientists that science ought to proceed in accordance with standard empiricism – with its fixed aim and fixed methods. Science has achieved success despite, and not because of, general allegiance of scientists to standard empiricism. The pursuit of scientific knowledge dissociated from a more fundamental concern to help humanity improve aims

and methods in life is, as we have seen, a recipe for disaster. This is the crisis behind all the others. It is this crisis that this book tackles head on.

Much of the book takes the form of a fierce debate between a Scientist and a Philosopher, although towards the end of the book various other characters blunder into the book – a Romantic, a Rationalist, a Liberal, a Marxist, a Christian, a Buddhist and, right at the end of the book, a Wino. I am ashamed to say that even I put in an appearance towards the end, when things get a bit out of hand.

When I wrote the book, I wanted the Scientist to be misguided, a firm upholder of the orthodox conception of science of standard empiricism, but nevertheless a man of intellectual integrity. I had in mind someone like the psychologist Hans Eysenck. My idea was that the argument should reflect real life arguments in being explosively emotional at times, and also such that no one was convinced by the arguments of the opposition. In Plato, again and again, Socrates produces ridiculous arguments and his opponents say “Yes, O Socrates” and “How true, O Socrates”. In my experience this never happens in real life. My dialogue, I decided, would be the very opposite of Plato’s dialogues in this respect.

I first had my “flash of inspiration”, upon which this book is based, in 1972. I wrote a manuscript called *The Aims of Science* and sent it off to Macmillan’s for consideration for publication. I met three editors, each of whom became very excited about the book before leaving and passing the manuscript onto their successor. Finally the book was passed

onto a new editor, a Marxist I was told, who I never met, and who rejected the book. It was never published. I wrote and wrote drafts and sketches of books, one after another, in a frenzy of despair, fearing I would never succeed in publishing my great idea. Then a friend introduced me to a friend of his, who said he would publish a book of mine if I could get it ready in six weeks. I thought about it for three weeks, and then, in a state of exalted concentration, managed to write the whole of this book in the remaining three weeks. The debate between Scientist and Philosopher raged furiously in my head. I remember feeling as if I was in a train hurtling towards a dark tunnel; I had a few precious seconds to release a dove with an all-important message for humanity, but if I was not quick, the train would enter the tunnel, it would be too late, the dove would be killed, and the message would remain undelivered. I did finish the book on time, and it was published in the Autumn of 1976.

This book definitely belongs to the romantic phase of my working life. One of the accomplishments of the idea I expound is that it achieves a synthesis of rationalism and romanticism. As I say at one point: "At its best, science puts the mind in touch with the heart, and the heart in touch with the mind, so that we may acquire heartfelt minds, and mindful hearts". Nevertheless, it is difficult in practice to achieve a balance between these two wings of our culture. In subsequent work I have swung into rationalist mode, anxious to make out as cogent a case as I can for the idea I have been struggling to communicate all these years. In this book, the romantic mode prevails.

But in rereading this book for this second edition, I was delighted, but also somewhat dismayed, to discover that much of the work I thought I had propounded later, in subsequent books and articles, is already present here, even if sometimes in nascent form. What the book has to say is as relevant today as it was in 1976 – perhaps more so. Subsequent intellectual developments have not dimmed its message, and subsequent events have, if anything, only served to highlight the urgency of what it has to say. Apart from correcting typographical errors, and adding at the end a list of relevant books and articles published after 1976, I have made no changes.

We are in deep trouble. We can no longer afford to blunder blindly on our way. We must strive to peer into the future and steer a course less doomed to disaster. Humanity must learn to take intelligent and humane responsibility for the unfolding of history. I hope this book helps.

Tavistock Terrace, London, January 2009

The second edition of *What Is Wrong With Science?* will be published by Pentire Press. For further inquiries please contact Nicholas Maxwell.

WORDS OF WISDOM: for Graduating University Scholars

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Observations about the concept of
wisdom. Advice for those who would
live thoughtful, cumulative lives...On
the pursuit of wisdom in one's life

INTRODUCTION

The winds of change blow hot, causing
expectations that tend toward
overwhelming, and trepidations which
cannot find ground. We learned to see,
to study, to make... to have knowledge,
to harness the power of nature and
enhance life. Truth! We were told to
seek truth, and seek we did; now to find
it turned upon us in the lands of Babel
where Faust has sought power,
challenging the transcendent.

We have become enamoured of our
own creations yet find their offal
beyond our means to contemplate. We
have extended the time of our being yet
worry that it cannot be filled. We work
long hours at working hard, and lose the
time we sought. Life gets longer; we
get smaller...and wonder whence
purpose meanders.

Like other times when life's scripts lost
their theatre we tempt ourselves to seek
entireties. We had thought progress, we
had thought utopia. Now we mock all
that. The search for wisdom fades.
Zarathustra's once soothing laugh now



sounds raucous, runs in one ear,
scampers without direction.

Socrates and the Oracle at Delphi peek
out after generations of obscure
wandering whose times believed the
words but abandoned the pursuit. He
and She emerge from clothes cloaked to
enter once again in dialogue with the
youth of all of time. The Teacher, aging,
aged, withstanding still the ravages of
being, wishing the world still to go on;
stands, still. The Teacher grasping for
the Socrates within, reaches for the full
power of being just as one subverts that
power and urges others to enter study
with...the Teacher. The Teacher, a study
of self, is engaged in dialogue with
Delphi; she who counsels still: know
thysself!

I Why Wisdom is So Hard to Find
Nowadays

II Some Words about Pursuing Wisdom

III Some Authors to Read When the
Necessity Overtakes You - Some
Positions from Which to Read Them

IV Some Risks ...and Paradoxes
Concerning Meaning

V On Pursuing Wisdom with An-Other

I Why Wisdom is So Hard to Find Nowadays

A muse upon these changing times. The future is unscripted, the directions in which we go flow every which way; some double-back upon our being, dislocating the very concept of where we might be, be going...The late Italian novelist and literary critic, Italo Calvino, in thinking about *The Written and the Unwritten Word*, said: "I realize how much the very idea of wisdom is unattainable today." (NYRB 5/12/83)

These days, the concept of wisdom seems to lie on some continuous axis of information, knowledge, and wisdom...thus if information is the stuff of knowledge, then knowledge would be the stuff of wisdom in some summational scheme of life. If one gathers enough information, develops this into (useful?) knowledge, then knowledge would extend somehow into wisdom. But this doesn't seem to be the case. Wisdom, the very concept of wisdom, seems nebulous, not located in any place or scheme of things - in this time. (Would reading "great minds" help?)

Perhaps the equation of information and knowledge undermines the concept of wisdom. Wisdom usually connotes or presumes a long life filled with wide and deep landscapes, decades of critical experience tempered and recreated into a person whose vision penetrates life deeply; a person who sees, thus a seer; a sage whose view is from the proverbial mountain-top of life's ideations. Are there places left from which to view life's happenings, or is the world filled-up and filled-in? We have been everywhere by now, seen all there is to

see; blocked-out/blocked-off all the landscapes of our earthly existence.

Some think we have lost the idea of progress, resting upon scientific and technological advances which have created as much garbage as they have goods. Our heads spin as the spin doctors and other revisionists do and redo our thinking. Contemplation has, perhaps, become another redundant employee our lives constructed purely from the betrayals of caveat emptor: beware! Is it our major watchword?

Others say the problem is that we have lost the religious outlook which constructed our moral selves, and without that nothing is sacred. Surely wisdom would be a sacred art. So we must carve out some notions of the sacred within-the-secular to regain the possibility of wisdom.

Perhaps, this moment in history which experiences all the world's traditions of thought and being now coming together in contrast and competition, wonders and ponders the possibilities of life's directions.

If wisdom is a woman (which *philosophia* is) perhaps this is a moment of regathering the power which wisdom necessitates.

Perhaps it is the sense we have that the science and technology which has been so successful in this moment creating longer and longer lives, has also supported the idea that old age equates with retirement, and that work is something to be done with, the earlier the better. On the contrary...

Cynicism grows out of proportion as skepticism about the possibility of knowledge grows and grows, saturating our lives, ourselves, our thinking. The loss of confidence in the idea of progress feeds itself with the underside and garbage of technology's powers. Technology is thing become real, replacing the quest for reality, robotizing life. Beavis and Butt Head kick ass!

The world is itself at some risk as humans have overtaken it. We no longer find ourselves at home, no tents to pitch, no domiciles in which to live. Meaning, being, identity; where in the world is there to be?

II Some Words About Pursuing Wisdom

Wisdom is not a state of being, but a mode of being, a pursuing of knowledge and understanding of one's deepening being.

Wisdom is critical of the concept of wisdom: wisdom is as wisdom does (Forrest Gump). The vacillating boundaries between being wise and being a *wise-guy* illuminate wisdom. The edges of life provide the footing necessary to undergird it.

Wisdom is a form of work in the sense of a life-work; one's life-as-a-work.

Wisdom is an art form: toward the construction of wisdom which has no direct path. It is an aesthetic, a sense of judgment and self-judgment. It entails a willingness never to be complete. It is a form of artistry. Experience-as-art.

Wisdom requires character work, usually beginning earlier in life. Character is distinguished from virtuosity. Virtuosity is a sense of genius **at** work. Wisdom *is* work - a sense of vocation - of meaning of one's being which would be sufficient to fill-out the longest life. (Kierkegaard) The notion of the training physician is illustrative: one needs to have seen a wide variety of cases, of persons living in the best and worst of times; has to have been invested in illnesses at all moments of their symptomatology, literally to be able to smell a dis-ease. Only after this apprenticeship may one begin to train others. Only then, only now can wisdom grow.

Wisdom is not a state-of-being which descends like a gift - or like a shroud - upon a life lived well at each or any point. It extends, often amoeba-life from life's adversities much as from its successes. It dances upon the edges of being.

Wisdom is a utopic pursuit, a sense of life continuing to develop and grow, progress and transcend. It is a directedness which continues to open. It explores as well, the worst and most dystopic of life's possibilities that inform the ongoingness of life's ventures.

Wisdom is particularly responsible to one's sense of hope and futurity. Whether it is also responsible to others remains one of wisdom's puzzlings. (The sage descending.)

Wisdom is at some odds with information and knowledge, either of which may obscure the pursuit of wisdom. Information and knowledge

offer a sense of being and knowing which seems useful in any moment. But they seem so much to fill being that they may obscure the possibility of wisdom, continuing to externalize knowing and to place it outside of being. Masters do not see other masters in the same ways as their students. (Nietzsche - *The Wanderer and His Shadow* #341)

Wisdom is also at odds with the sins and virtues, the temptations, pushes, pulls, and repulsions of life. It is demanding beyond the quests for fame or power, greed or vengeance. It sifts critically the virtues and aims to live beyond good and evil. (Nietzsche)

Wisdom accepts the best and worst of life's possibilities, accepting what cannot be and pushing its boundaries. The limits of wisdom are only apparent.

Wisdom knows good times and hard times. It is not hearable in good times, but uses them to prepare for harder times when wisdom appears desirable. (Is this Zarathustra's time?)

Wisdom accepts life and being as paradoxical. It does not try to resolve life's paradoxes, rather to search them in their complementarities. It moves toward an understanding of the smoke and mirrors of being which others try either to grasp or to void.

Wisdom - in this global moment - enters the thinking of the entire world's traditions, coming back to review one's own thinking wearing the newly ground lenses of others' thinking the world and of wisdom; including the knowledge that our knowledge of the world is of and

through the human. Other species, machines offer perspectives on being, especially as thinking them through and thinking through them, offers us reflective positions from which to view our own modes and habits of viewing. Wisdom, that is, is inclusive of all of life.

Wisdom accepts the deepest nihilisms of life's potential offerings: accepts them, explores them, and moves beyond.

Wisdom cannot remain within the world and life unless it remains open to critics; good friends, especially, but also those who disagree.

[Wisdom is an affirmation. Wisdom says, Yes, to life.]

Within any dialectic of fear and wonder, wisdom chooses wonder. (Kierkegaard) On the axis of change and permanence, wisdom dances its most elaborate steps.

Extricating oneself from Dead Ends - how committed to be...?

Wisdom as: path, doing, contemplation, escape.

Know thyself: The Delphic Oracle.

Wisdom implies a sense of and for Strength: be strong enough not to have to destroy the world in order to save it. How to be and remain strong – strong, sufficient to maintain some sense of the boundaries of one's integrity, honesty. How to do all this? Expand...!

Some ponderings:

About the deadly sins: it is never clear whether age permits or enhances the

pursuit of wisdom in any sense per se; or whether the experience accumulated through the years helps one to know one's habits, thus to foretell various possibilities. Does wisdom arrive/does one arrive at wisdom...when one knows one's temptations? Foreseeing them, can one forestall them?

Power, (fame), vengeance, pride, greed. For example, in these times when greed is celebrated, honesty, truth, and integrity become central to all other issues.

Difficulties in knowing what to remember, what to ignore as one ages, pursues wisdom? Too much, too little, an ongoing puzzle which seems to increase in its complexities on the road to wisdom.

III Some Authors (read them by accompanying them hand-in-hand through life - not as a disciple, but as co-thinkers. Asking, how would she or he think about life, here and now. What issues moved them, that also move me?)

Some authors to ponder: Confucius, Descartes (Rules for the Direction of the Mind), Moses, Christ, Mohammed, Gandhi, The Stoics (Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius), Rumi, The Oracles, Heraclitus (most especially), Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, The Buddha, The Sophists (Protagoras), Plato/Aristotle, oneself...

Differences between those cultures which have great teaching traditions and those which do not: questions of maintaining the idea and concept of the future vs. those who dwell in the pasts, and passings.

IV Risks...and Paradoxes Concerning Wisdom

That the quest for wisdom is one of pride; or is not.

The boundaries between pride and arrogance; the line between the nerve to do what is next and what oversteps being.

That wisdom knows no bounds; that wisdom is clearly bounded.

That wisdom is a search for calmness; that one measures wisdom as the feeling of calm. A filling; an emptying...depending on questions of author-ity and agency.

That wisdom is located well within oneself; that wisdom is located outside of oneself.

That a tradition committed to the pursuit of truth above all else, will implode itself with its arrogance and hubris: the Sciences and the Humanities, Faustian temptations.

That knowing one's temptations very well, one doesn't any longer permit oneself to be tempted; permit/yield, the distinction lingers.

That each tomorrow is new; that each tomorrow is no more than today.

Wisdom is being able to discern the differences between strength and endurance, and to invoke that which is appropriate to any moment.

V On Pursuing Wisdom with Another

The temptation – driven much by the complications of the impending death of one’s physical body – to think that we are alone, that alone we pursue wisdom.

We are not alone – even if we seem to live alone, separated from all the others. There are, actively within us, those who raised us, family, friends, teachers, spouses and partners with whom we made/make similar contracts to continue being who we are with respect to their being, as our children. To pursue wisdom occurs within such contexts. If one desires to remove oneself from the histories and contexts of one’s ordinary, one’s previous life experience...?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:

How I conceive of the purpose of the FOW

David Morey

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I think I would like to approach considering the purpose of the Friends of Wisdom by briefly describing my own intellectual development and how I came across Nick Maxwell's work, and recognise that Nick is trying to explore and address many of the issues that interest and concern myself.

I guess we all try to make some sense of the world we are living in. Born in 1964 I was exposed to some religious education as a young man, but I never doubted that religion was something in decline in the society I was part of. Yet I also understood the value of the parables I learnt and that there are moral issues to consider in life. Of much higher status in society and in education was the activity called science. It was quite clear to me that if I wanted to understand the world and society in which I lived then science was the place to look for such understanding.

As my early education progressed I continued to learn about science but was also introduced to the study of the arts. This is where the problems began. I think the question that came to capture the problems for me was: what is a human being? It seemed to me that the portrait of human beings to be found in the arts seemed to be vastly richer than



that of the sciences. I was reading books that purported to give the 'scientific' view, such as those by Richard Dawkins and Jacques Monod that, whilst containing much of interest, seemed to describe a reality in which the vast richness of human experience was to be explained in terms that made this richness neither intelligible or plausible.

Confusion descended upon me, at eighteen I flunked my A levels and left formal education. But my studies continued. Some interesting BBC TV programmes came my way. Brian Magee's Great Philosophers and Don Cupitt's The Sea of Faith. These programmes introduced me to philosophy generally, philosophy of science in particular, and the history of science. I now wanted to understand why we had the sort of science we did and its close historic association with the secularising and politically complex Enlightenment. At the same time, alternative perspectives on reality and experience came to my attention,

whether from the likes of Blake and the latter great Romantics, the intriguing differences between Freud and Jung, the challenge to subject-object dualism launched by Heidegger, the analysis of secularism and nihilism offered by Nietzsche, the challenge to biological orthodoxy proposed by Rupert Sheldrake, or the implications of quantum theory being increasingly explored in a number of books.

Somehow or other I got my first taste of post-modernism around this time when I read Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Via Rorty my interest in Heidegger grew. Heidegger seemed to offer a more fundamental challenge to the conceptual straight jacket that science seemed to have got itself into. Heidegger suggests that we have been dominated by a certain set of questionable metaphysical assumptions since Plato. So I kept up a very wide range of studies, wrote a novel of ideas called *The Secret of Matter* as a consequence, and made my living working in finance.

So I found myself to be a generalist in a world of specialists. After studying the history of science and belief with the Open University for a year, I went to study the extreme minority choice of Intellectual History at Sussex University aged twenty-three. This was a good but flawed experience. I had an excellent tutor who was largely interested in the nineteenth century and little in current intellectual fashions. However, in the main, Sussex University was obsessed with deconstruction and post-modernism. Whilst there is work of great interest and value that falls under the post-modern banner, as a whole it seems designed to handicap students with a

jargon loaded hell. I did my best to make some sense of it at the time but three years was no way near long enough to do so.

At the end of my three years, despite the difficulties, I found that my well read preparations for university meant that attaining a first class degree came very easily, which is often the case for more mature students; so I could quite easily have continued my university studies. But the atmosphere at Sussex was terrible. It was the end of the eighties, university funding seemed to be shrinking, lecturers seemed to be miserable and full of self-pity, and post-modernism seemed to have stalled the openings for a new approach begun by Heidegger. I decided that a return to work in finance and the freedom to direct my own further studies was a more inviting prospect.

After university I continued my interest in the history and philosophy of science, and set about making more sense of post-modernism and why this was where we had ended up after Romanticism and modernism. One beacon of good sense came to me in my studies, and this was Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self*. In this work Taylor takes us through the Enlightenment, Romanticism, modernism and shows how we have ended up with the ideas associated with post-modernism. Taylor unpacks the underlying values and assumptions of the Enlightenment and Romanticism that remain with us today. It was through Taylor that I began to see that it is not just subject-object dualist metaphysics that gives us the sort of science and self-image that we have of ourselves as human beings; and that secularism itself (something I had never questioned

before) is involved in the scientific orthodoxy that banished values (in an odd, perhaps unintended, alliance with the needs of the commercialism of globalisation, and often cheered on by the secular Left) from our attempts to attain objective knowledge and a better world (perhaps I should add that I have not neglected to examine the political aspects of these cultural developments too and the obvious problems we have had with trying to obtain a better world).

Some years latter, having found it a life necessity to make some efforts to develop a financial career, I rewrote my youthful novel called the Secret of Matter. Whilst I got some positive feedback I was unable to get this work published, but one reader commented to me that it was a very unusual and clearly not very fictional work, and that the only thing he had read before that was anything like it was Robert Pirsig's Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, intrigued I took a look at this work. I found in Pirsig another great challenge to subject-object metaphysics, much in common with Heidegger, but showing how these ideas could be explained to a wider audience and bringing up again the issue of values.

In recent years I have enjoyed discussing Pirsig with other enthusiasts on the internet, many of whom are also very well read and looking for ways to get over our current intellectual problems. My interest in Pirsig has led me to re-examine the American pragmatist philosophers like William James and John Dewey, who are important figures for Richard Rorty as well. It also seems that with the fading of post-modernism, that the American pragmatists are having a bit of a comeback.

My own views seem to lie somewhere between those of John Dewey (who looks to re-shape empiricism by grounding it in values that are truly consultative and democratic and by recognising the primacy of lived human experience -through which we encounter a world at all) and the more sensible criticisms of science and scientism raised by the better post-modernists. It was around this time I first came across Nick's work and his take on these problems. The great thing about Nick, it seems to me, is that he gets beyond the problems that many of us are aware of, to suggest a new approach to empiricism that gets to grip with the need to build an examination of values right into the heart of our approach to knowledge: to realise what is of value (a slogan that would sound suspicious to the flawed objectivist-secularist orthodoxy of the old Left).

This is how I have come to where I am and why I am interested in what may become of the Friends of Wisdom. I have not said much about my interest in the changes that seem to be emerging in science itself. But it seems to me that science too is struggling to throw off its Platonist and Greek assumptions, that we live in a world not just of law and order, but one that is far more dynamic, uncertain and open than we have previously thought, which means that there are real possibilities (something physicalists find problematic) to realise a better world and also that there is a genuine danger that we might not.

FRIENDS OF WISDOM FORUMS

Developed by Scott Meyers
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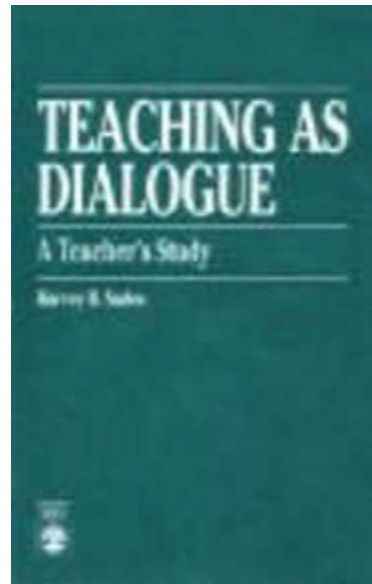
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**FROM THE INTRODUCTION TO
TEACHING AS DIALOGUE BY
HARVEY SARLES**

Teaching is a messy Art. It is a relationship; a study of subject matter, of the subjective self, of politics, management, techniques. It occurs more than it exists. And it is a different order of event from the perspectives of Teacher, and of student.

I say *Teacher* rather than *teacher* because the concept of Teacher is more than a societal role. The Teacher has at least in potential the possibility of shaping minds, ideas, even of inspiring deeply the future. The teacher become Teacher contains—within the perceptions and memories, imaginations and life-unfoldings of one's students—a continuing presence which far transcends the ordinary and mundane. The concept of Teacher contains the power to inspire and to remain alive in the thinking of those who are touched by some particular Teacher.

Whereas the teacher purveys knowledge, the Teacher represents knowledge and continuity whose towardness is hopeful. In this age, an era which Kierkegaard (1940) glossed *The Present Age*—where knowledge and life are eased toward bureaucratization—knowledge itself has become a *business*. Like the model of



the efficient business as machine, the quest for knowledge has opted for efficiency and technique. The question of depth, of yearning toward the attainment of wisdom, has been forsaken. Knowledge now seems to be too vast to be contained. Teachers fade into the information solicitors and inquisitors whom we now dub *lecturers* and *facilitators*.

As hope is about the future, the issue of thinking about the future in which the students will be living affects how we consider time. The recent freezing of knowledge into bureaucratic pigeonholes affects the experiencing of time. It shapes and frames time and history and the concept of futurity, quite literally. When information resides outside anyone's actual experience, it does not necessarily relate to any futurity.

Without living Teachers, how do we go on? Where is the agenda; who is reading and acting the scripts of life's theaters?

For the fearful and the weak—and who of us is not sometimes—the temptation arises to say: *This is too much!* For them and for us, the either/or which appears on the horizon of solution is a *quick fix*. We are urged to abandon trust and confidence in ourselves, in life virtually, and to trust in the texts of some ancient persons who claim genius or divine inspiration. Or we may travel this bumpy road: from a skepticism which tries to sort out clamoring claims to knowledge; to a cynicism which has no trust in the authority of any one claim over any other; toward a nihilism which distrusts all claims... What meaning means now, seems to many to have no path toward solution!

Nietzsche, who correctly prophesied the *Rise of European Nihilism* more than a century ago, offered us a figuration of the ancient sage Zarathustra who was to inspire us to *overcome* ourselves. He did not foresee this world so shrunk by technology, our entire earth a single economy, and its ideas moving from continent to continent to attract and to dismay us, almost in the same instant. But he did understand that the foundations of Christian morality which led us to value truth so deeply, also led

us to see the circularity in the concept of the divine which would leave us unanchored: ungrounded, incapable, unfit to judge where we are...not knowing how to move on, to overcome ourselves; nor to enter the future with strength and endurance. We find ourselves ironically lost from ourselves, engaged in various crises of meaning.

The sage Zarathustra was to return here to inspire and inform. Yet the places where the people congregate could not—or would not—hear the message. The sage Zarathustra has no particular authority in this time when meaning has itself lost meaning. No one does!

What remains is us. The Teacher needs to enter into dialogue with those who are here. She nor he can *tell* truth, can no longer lay claim to the wisdom of all of time. What the Teacher has positively is endurance and continuing presence, a love of life and justice and knowing, and an abiding sense for the notion of hope and the future. (As well the concept of Teacher can destroy...)

Here and now is where this pedagogy finds itself. The Teacher is cast, like Socrates in Plato's *Apology*, as the seeker after knowledge and wisdom who invites and leads and goads us into inquiry. By engaging in dialogue with the young and uninformed the Teacher can get them to

think, conceptualize critically and anew, and rise to the lights of knowledge which Plato promises in *The Republic*—his notion of the responsible citizen in utopic bliss.

No doubt this is what all Teachers aim toward.

Yet here and now is where we are; where Teachers find themselves imagining their students to be more perfect than they are themselves. But here and now we are all flesh. Our lives consist of the ordinary and mundane which battle utopic wishes and transcendental temptations. The entire world has become the text of each day's bombarding news. We find ourselves often lacking the energy necessary to complete each day, much less float beyond it.

Living in a time when the history of ideas has pushed us to technologize teaching, first by concentrating on learning and the learner, then by offering texts and machines, the very idea of the Teacher has been down-played to disappearance. Like the cliché: *if you're so smart, why aren't you...*, the corollary has submerged teaching to doing; contemplation to production. Teaching no longer controls its own destiny. As education has become bureaucratized and like a business, it has bought each

step on this technologized ladder...only to discover as it approached the top that the rungs had devoured themselves below.

Here and now *Teaching as Dialogue* propels teaching and the Teacher directly into a world where marketing vies with truth and authorizes fame itself. This is an attempt to ground knowledge in the persona of a Teacher—someone, an actual course taken with a real person—who continues beyond any course of study to resonate in present/future thinking.

As our thinking is full of others, parents, friends, from past and present, so Teachers often enter in, formulate and shape thinking. For those of us who have been fortunate enough to have *studied-with* people who, indeed, did inspire us, this idea of Teacher remains clear and alive in current thinking—even as we age beyond the age of exposure to those whom we think of as: my, our, Teachers.

But there is also much distrust of the idea of the Teacher. Claims of technology vie with the presence of persons who teach. The programmed course and the programmed person who acts as a mediator or facilitator of knowledge seem surer and safer and pre-determined in ways that a live Teacher

can never be. Why the Teacher? Why, indeed?

One reason. We permit few people to touch us. Yet we are social creatures and praise love. It is within the relationship of vulnerability and power that we may locate ourselves. It is here where we may find the grounding, the sense of permanence and continuity into our futures which permits us to enter each newness with firm step and ways to engage life's vicissitudes. Teachers may touch us and provide us with a sense of going on and to search for directedness.

It is within this relation of vulnerability and power that Freire believes the future is cast. If their vulnerabilities are abused, students become oppressed...and will seek to oppress others in their own (future) time of power because this is *the* lesson in being they have learned. Rather, if the vulnerabilities are nurtured, explored, and overcome through dialogue, the touch of the Teacher may be used to inspire, indeed to *guarantee* the futurity of the students.

Teaching is a protected and a *sacred* place where the Teacher—like the curer—may touch our minds and guide us toward paths of knowledge. This is...Why the Teacher!

To be that Teacher: that one who inspires, that one who can overcome oneself to grow beyond each today, the one who can find the joys and forms of art in teaching; the one who does not seek power and glory in a setting whose power is limited by the definitional weakness of neophytes? How to be and to become that Teacher!?

How to deal with the mundane, the ordinariness of one's own life, year after year—getting older actually, aging rapidly relative to each next year's youth seeming always younger? Where does that Teacher (where do I) find inspiration and groundedness? An anchor, a compass maybe, hopefully, to one's students? Nonetheless the Teacher finds oneself afloat in the rivers of Heraclitus whose tributaries of consciousness are no less demanding upon the Teacher than she or he is upon others. One must seek out the Oracle at Delphi who resides within us in our deepest parts seeking, imploring: *know ourselves!*

The traps and temptations of teaching are legion. In the harmonic schemes of Eastern thought they do not oppose its joys but act as their elaborative siblings: the greater the artistic possibilities in teaching, the deeper the traps, the more subtle the temptations. What are these;

how do they arise; what is it to overcome oneself-as-Teacher?

The ever-recurring snares of teaching are located in its asymmetries. The Teacher is concrete, the students change; teaching is from the past, studying is toward a future; Teachers are strong, the students weak; old...young; tellers...hearers; powerful...weak.

The Teacher's temptation is to become, inside, existentially, the person whom the asymmetry defines as unchanging and unyielding; a despot, a crone who forgets the virtues of occasional silences. The unforgiving trap is that the teacher-person may become defined by role, and lose the virtues by which one came to this place. In fact the Teacher lives two lives and must be doubly careful.

Unobvious are the life-paradoxes which unfold at odd times, revealing and recasting the Teacher's being in unexpected ways. Teaching is, very often, an aloneness within a crowd. It is at the moments of greatest personal vulnerability that the power in the teaching role declares itself most clearly. Oddnesses of petty jealousies and vengeful feelings crop up in relationships of power. They must be well-managed lest they oppress more than inspire. The truly elaborate plays upon one's consciousness of being

Teacher are awesome upon discovering each next time that students more study Teachers than they do their subject matters; that they try to please/defy Teachers more than pursue knowing. How to deserve their willingness to please? How to translate love/fear of Teacher into love of knowledge?

Does Pedagogy exist? Does it have a life...of its own? Perhaps. Within the current vastness of the curriculum, where disciplinary discourse often erects seemingly sensible boundaries, *Teaching as Dialogue* has opted to respect each Teacher's definitions of their own subject.

Pedagogy—itself—is a study, a doing, an on and on. Its subject matter is its students, the dynamics and directness of conceptual thought and conceptual change, reading of faces, logic and the rhetoric of argumentation and persuasion, an ongoing critique of these and future times, and the how-to's of planning and presentation.

As teaching is touching the minds of students, the Teacher must study those students; those students in particular. The politics of the classroom may only mimic the Realpolitik, but they are nonetheless quite real to its students. Here students may practice, try out, be tested and test their Teachers. Granted

the power inherent in the yielding of students' spirits, we Teachers need to enter into dialogue with these students and reveal aspects of our characters...as Teachers.

Much of this pedagogy, therefore, is concerned with the nature of *dialogue*: its preparation, dynamics, and process; in the skills which make it possible; in the reactions it prompts; and in the competencies which help make it full. Unlike any ancient Socrates embalmed in texts as phenomena to be memorized, we Teachers must remain human and alive. We Teachers need to balance power with love and humility even when tested; perhaps especially when tested.

Dialogue is a performative art, a fast-form in which the agenda must remain partially loose, tailored to those who are actually present, each day.

Dialogue is exploration, a mode of search and critical inquiry which can direct students toward paths of solution, but leaves the future—their lives—open to be studied, lived. Here the temptation of the Teacher toward power can be used to strengthen the fragile and brittle...or to break them.

It is in interaction, the dialogue, the sharing of spirits, of modes of thinking, that teaching is its most exquisite. It is a

way, an insistent means for the Teacher who has *heard it all before* to remain alive in one's own consciousness, to resist boredom, and the mere filling of the classroom. Dialogue is a means of remaining in the students' present which the Teacher's power may entice him or her to abandon.

Where dialogue deceives is in its seduction of the Teacher to *be* a Teacher...mostly and primarily. Teaching is incomplete whenever being a Teacher lacks substance and subject matter: what any course is *about*. In fact the *aboutness* of teaching is as important as the ability to fill the classroom. In this sense knowledge only directs us toward the future when the Teacher remains scholar and student to oneself. What is inspirational is that the Teacher's thinking and paths toward knowledge become available to inspire each student's future. If teaching overwhelms its subject matter, then the sense of any future is weakened. Students will *live-out* their lives, but they don't truly *live* them.

As the Teacher is critical and thoughtful, dialogue is useful in enabling, inviting students to *think*. Dialogue can open up areas to questions whose paths toward solutions require critical thought and self-criticism. The conduct of dialogue between Teacher and students enables

their gradual awakening to the labyrinths of thought in which their Teacher treads in one's own seekings of wisdom: a life-task.

Wisdom—which is a search—considers the nature of being human. The depiction of dialogue is an entry into the quest for being and toward being human. The path of the Teacher is moving and Zarathustra-like in its internalities. The Teacher's study, revealed little-by-little to those students who would themselves become Teachers, deepens and goes on and on.

It is an obligation of teaching that Teachers be judges. This is no simple task, neither to contemplate nor to exercise. This is a terrain of some vastness. The activity of judgment requires rapid vacillation between sage and prophet; between performance and promise so the Teacher can assure that a high grade will have application in the students' futures. But the future belongs particularly to the students; not to the teacher. *Teaching as Dialogue* offers no direction here, only some analysis; neither prophecy nor certain prediction. It dodges, feints, and side-steps the issue by urging that Teachers direct students to engage in critical self-judgment...just as their Teacher.

Here the best the Teacher can do is provide an intellectual and personal esthetic: not only toward what is good or true, but the sense that there will always exist paths toward increasing knowledge for critical thought and judgment; that such paths will remain available; that the Teacher and her teachings through dialogue will help reveal where those paths may be found. What is called *inspiration* is the sense that each student will be able to search those paths in one's own futurity, and find firm groundings along the paths and by-ways of one's Teacher.

As judgment is an aspect of living well and with some care, it is more important that the Teacher live carefully and well, than that one judge or reward performance in the present of any course of study. In fact, I urge that the teaching judgment be toward the *best-motivated self*. Judgment is directed toward the sense of each student's future which will please both Teacher and the student (when they have achieved good critical taste).

On the other hand certifying the value of each student as a real person deserving of full human beingness, is a primary political act. Real, but incomplete; needing to be broader, deeper, and confirming a long life whose possibilities remain immanent. The

Teacher who enters into dialogue, who studies the vulnerabilities, who has been granted the right to judge, must judge and say what that judgment is. In the same breath the Teacher can affirm that change and growth are aspects of forward movement and offer a model of that towardness in their continuing presence.

The final paradox in *Teaching as Dialogue* is that course completion remains unfinished. Here is where time and the politics of being conjoin to suffuse life with a towardness of becoming. Teaching as dialogue directs itself toward living as an auto-didact, as Teacher-to-oneself: always as a student, inquiring critically, judging the quality of life's engagements, searching for its meaning and finding sufficiency to energize each *Next Place* in life's streams...and the sustaining strength to see those qualities in the others who share this life-space.

**TEACHING AS DIALOGUE:
A TEACHER'S STUDY
By Harvey B. Sarles**

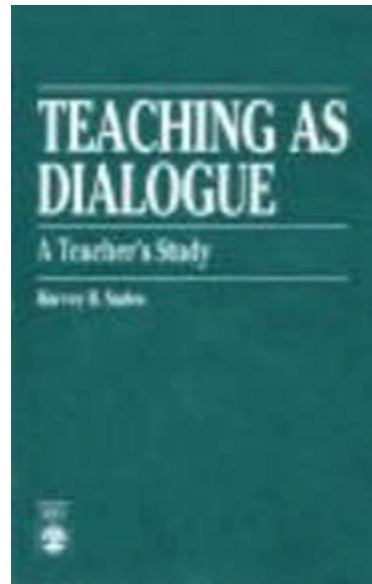
**University Press of America: 1993
ISBN 0-8191-8897-2**

REVIEW by Maarten van Schie

I'll give you my opinion forward and frank: I think this is a good book. What I have been reading the past month has been a book about teaching. I have read a few books on teaching, and most of them are full of theories and techniques to teach effectively, with standard presentation tricks like "Say what you are going to say, say it, and then say what you have said." These books are usually written in the manner of a college textbook, authoritative and impersonal.

The book that I have read and am reviewing now writes about teaching in a very different manner. It is, first and foremost, a very *personal* book. Harvey B. Sarles has written about his vision on what teaching is and what a teacher does and instead of writing about teaching as a job he writes about the teacher as a human being. From this perspective he explores the role of a Teacher, which is "the person who becomes Teacher to one's students: entering their spirits in some depth".

I admit I was at first a little put off by the ambitious metaphors of this kind in the beginning of the book. But Harvey Sarles has in his book distilled from the concept of teaching, which may be muddled up in "The Present Age" (Kierkegaard), the purely human and social aspects. And as he puts it, Teaching is not just about transferring



<http://harveysarles.com/book-teaching-as-dialogue/>

knowledge, it has the potential to shape minds and ideas and to inspire.

There are many things to be considered when we look at teaching from that perspective. Teaching is then not just didactic but interactive and a significantly social activity. With that in mind you may start to understand the title of the book. It is not just the teacher that is considered primarily from his being a human being in this book, but also the student. Interaction between the two, then, is in that regard on an equal level. Ideally anyway, as Sarles writes.

The first few chapters of the book explore what a Teacher is and does, conceptually. The Teacher has a lot of

knowledge and experience, but does not engage the student as an empty slate, unknowing and uncritical. The student is a peer of sorts, who has right and reason to question the teacher, though the latter is put in the position of teaching, thus having a position of some authority for the student.

So how to “Teach”? There is not one way to do this, different teachers and different subjects have different teaching styles (as is mentioned in the book). Harvey Sarles does not attempt describing how to teach excellently: instead he tells the reader about his experiences and cogitations on teaching. There is a passage, for example, where he shares how he prepares for a class, and how he feels about it. I am not a teacher, but I can imagine many teachers sharing these feelings. The major part of the book is a mixture of these kinds of experiences and the thoughts they lead to. It is in fact hard to distinguish between the two, as he writes mostly with his practice as a basis. This makes the book accessible and fairly easy to read. I can well imagine the settings he describes and relate to his thoughts in these settings. Still it is not a story-book, for his practice feeds the theory he tries to present. Rather, he presents the theory through the way he sees, does and experiences the practice of teaching.

In summary, this is an inspired book about teaching as a human activity, teaching with a capital T. Harvey Sarles explains, from his personal perspective and experience, what teaching is, and what Teaching. He elaborates on practical and philosophical problems to do with teaching, such as problems of power and empowerment (Freire's problem), the internal dialogue one

might have as a teacher, the content and context of teaching, an existential perspective on teaching, teaching towards growth and judgment and evaluation. He concludes with two chapters more focused on the teacher him- or herself learning and taking in knowledge, through auto-didacy and reading. This last chapter contains by far the majority of his references: in in the writer gives the reader reading suggestions for better and worse times, and books that have inspired him. This makes the bibliography of a—refreshingly—different kind than those I usually come across, with many references to authors like Confucius, Castaneda, Freire and Orwell.

The personal style of the book makes it read much like the author is talking to you, lecturing. Lecturing in his own style however, enticing the reader to follow his ideas but think for oneself. This makes it an interesting, for me even inspiring read. As a taster, I will finish with a citation from the book:

“An inspiring...Teacher, lecturer, gets students to want to engage in the future, in their futurity. Inspirational teaching is both good enough to be judged very well—for just what it is—and simultaneously to challenge the students or audience, to want to do it...as well. It is a negotiation over the nature of critical judgment, in which the inspirational activity becomes a touchstone for what is quality. It is a demonstration of what is possible (transcendent) within the mundane and seemingly ordinary...”

Editor's Endnote:

In *From Knowledge to Wisdom*, Nick Maxwell argued that there is need for wisdom-inquiry (WI) in academia. He also provided us with a general outline of what WI would be like if developed in accordance with rational cooperation and aim-orientated rationality (AOR) to realise by rational means what is of value in life, for oneself and others.

However, arguably, what is lacking in Nick's account of WI and AOR is a detailed description or model of how "higher education" could be developed in practice to solve particular global problems. Without such a detailed description or model, it is unlikely that academics and scientists will be persuaded that WI could be achieved in practice and change "higher education" for the better. Clearly we should not over-specify WI and turn it into an algorithmic method that would ignore the complexities of human experience and the irresolvable value pluralism evident in society, but we do need a detailed model or vision of what a university or research institute would look like if based on WI and AOR and how it would work in practice.

Where could we find such a vision? In my view, a good starting point can be found in the visionary work of Paulo Freire. This offers us a detailed approach to "problem-posing" education directed towards helping people realise what is of value in life, for themselves and others, also helping them understand the social and historical conditions that have prevented them from achieving this realisation. His approach is an example of how WI could be put into practice.



His posthumously published book *Pedagogy of Freedom* provides a clear overview of his approach and aims, which is helpful for readers unfamiliar with his work, but his educational theory is provided in detail in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Education for Critical Consciousness* shows how it worked in practice dealing with the problems of illiteracy and poor levels of education in 1960s Brazil and Chile. His ideas and methodology were further developed in *Cultural Action for Freedom* and are aimed at socially developing cooperative and critical dialogue, in order to reflect upon, analyse, and understand global problems in local contexts, and articulate and propose possible solutions to them.

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