FRIENDS OF WISDOM

NEWSLETTER

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What Should Friends of Wisdom Do?

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What Are Our Aims?

The basic task of Friends of Wisdom (FOW) is to help transform academia so that its aim becomes to seek and promote wisdom – wisdom being the capacity to realize what is of value in life, for oneself and others. Wisdom, so construed, includes knowledge, technological know-how and understanding, but much else besides, such as the capacity to see what is of value, and the capacity to help solve those problems of living that need to be solved if what is of value is to be realized.

With this much all – or almost all – members of FOW would, I think, agree. Disagreement may, however, begin to emerge when this basic task is specified in more detail. In what follows, I spell out, in more detail, how I think the above should be interpreted, and then consider:

(a) How FOW might set about clarifying its agreed basic task, and

(b) What FOW can do.

What I think the basic task of FOW should be is spelled out in my publications:

From Knowledge to Wisdom (1984, 2nd edition 2007);

Is Science Neurotic? (2004);

"What Kind of Inquiry Can Best Help Us Create a Good World?", *Science, Technology and Human Values 17*, 1992, pp. 205-27;

and

"Can Humanity Learn to become Civilized?", *Journal of Applied Philosophy 17*, 2000, pp. 29-44.

See also

www.knowledgetowisdom.org

www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/FRIENDSOFWISDOM.html.

Here, I give as succinct a summary as I can.

Two Kinds of Inquiry:
Two kinds (or conceptions) of inquiry need to be distinguished: *knowledge-inquiry* and *wisdom-inquiry*. Both take a basic humanitarian or social aim of inquiry to be to help promote human welfare, help enhance the quality of human life. Both claim to be *rational.*

According to knowledge-inquiry, the proper way for academic inquiry to pursue its humanitarian aim is, in the first instance, to pursue the quite distinct *intellectual* aim of acquiring knowledge. First, knowledge is to be acquired; then it can be applied to help solve social problems.

Knowledge-inquiry exercises a profound influence over academia today. It is *the* current paradigm for rational inquiry. Some academics, in the social sciences and humanities, influenced by such things as romanticism, postmodernism and social constructivism, resist the influence of knowledge-inquiry. These academics nevertheless tend to attest to the power and influence of knowledge-inquiry by their hostility towards it, and their anti-rationalist stance. (They make the great mistake of opposing knowledge-inquiry on the grounds of its supposed rationality, failing to appreciate that it is the *irrationality* of the view that is the problem.)

For, despite being the current dominant conception of rational inquiry, knowledge-inquiry is nevertheless deeply and damagingly irrational in a wholesale, structural manner. In the long term, this has profoundly adverse consequences for humanity. It means, above all, that humanity does not have, what it so urgently needs, a kind of inquiry rationally devoted to helping us learn how to make progress towards a good, civilized, wise world.

Wisdom-inquiry is what emerges when knowledge-inquiry is modified just sufficiently to correct its structural irrationality. Two arguments reveal the irrationality of knowledge-inquiry, and show how (and why) it needs to be modified to create wisdom-inquiry, a genuinely rational kind of inquiry that is, potentially, of greater benefit to humanity as a result.

First Argument: Problem-Solving Rationality
Four elementary rules of rational problem solving are:

(1) Articulate, and try to improve the articulation of, the problem to be solved.

(2) Propose and critically assess possible solutions.

(3) When necessary, break the problem to be solved into preliminary, specialized problems, in an attempt to work gradually towards the solution to the basic problem to be solved.

(4) Whenever (3) is put into practice, interconnect basic and specialized problem-solving, so that each may influence the other.

In order to enhance the quality of human life the problems that need to be solved are, fundamentally, problems of *living.* Even where new knowledge is needed, in medicine for example, or agriculture, it is always what we *do*, or abstain from doing, that enables us to achieve what is of value in life, and not new knowledge or technological know-how as such

(except when new knowledge is itself of value).

Thus, if academia is to pursue its humanitarian aim rationally, it needs to give intellectual priority to the tasks of

(1) articulating, and improving the articulation of, our problems of living,

and

(2) proposing and critically assessing possible *actions, policies, political programmes, philosophies of life*.

In addition,

(3) specialized problems of knowledge and technological know-how need to be tackled,

but

(4) fundamental and specialized problem-solving need to influence each other.

Academic inquiry today, organized in accordance with the edicts of knowledge-inquiry, puts rule (3) into practice to splendid effect. Disastrously, however, it violates rules (1), (2) and (4). Some discussion of problems of living does go on in academia, in departments and centres devoted to policy, peace, environment, international relations, development, in the social sciences and humanities. But this does not proceed as the intellectually fundamental task of inquiry, at the heart of the academic enterprise, influencing more specialized research in the natural, technological and formal sciences – as required by rules (1), (2) and (4). As long as knowledge-inquiry is the dominant creed, this cannot happen.

Academia today, in short, violates in a wholesale, structural way, three of the four most elementary rules of reason conceivable.

The first version of wisdom-inquiry emerges when knowledge-inquiry is modified just enough to ensure that all four rules of problem solving are put into academic practice. This would have dramatic consequences for the nature of academic inquiry, and its relationship with the rest of society, as we shall see below.

Second Argument: Aim-Pursuing Rationality

What is the origin of the current structural irrationality of academia? It goes back at least to the Enlightenment of the 18th century. The *philosophes* of the French Enlightenment, in particular, had (implicitly at least) the magnificent idea that it might be possible to learn from *scientific progress towards greater knowledge* how to make *social progress towards an enlightened world*. Unfortunately, they developed this idea in a seriously defective form. They thought it involved creating the social sciences alongside the natural sciences. This defective version of the basic Enlightenment idea was then further developed throughout the 19th century, and built into the structure of academia in the early 20th century with the creation of disciplines and departments of social science. The result is what we have today: knowledge-inquiry.

In order to implement the basic Enlightenment idea correctly, it is

essential to get the following three steps right:

(i) The progress-achieving methods of natural science need to be correctly specified.

(ii) These need to be correctly generalized so as to become potentially fruitfully applicable to any worthwhile, problematic human endeavour, and not just to the endeavour of acquiring knowledge.

(iii) These generalized progress-achieving methods then need to be got into the social fabric, into all aspects of human life, into all our other institutions besides science, into government, the media, industry, commerce, the law, education, international relations and, above all, into the long-term endeavour to make progress towards an enlightened world.

Unfortunately, the *philosophes* got all three steps wrong. Much more disastrously and reprehensibly, academia today continues to get all three steps wrong – knowledge-inquiry being the outcome. I take the three steps in turn.

(i) Natural scientists today continue to hold that the basic aim of science is truth, the basic method being to assess claims to knowledge impartially with respect to evidence. But this orthodox idea of *standard empiricism* (as it may be called) is untenable. Physicists only ever accept *explanatory* or *unified* theories, even though endlessly many empirically more successful non-explanatory, disunified rivals can always be concocted. This persistent acceptance of explanatory theories only, in a sense *against the evidence*, means that physics makes a big, profoundly problematic implicit assumption about the nature of the universe: it is such that all non-explanatory theories are false. Or: the universe is (more or less) physically comprehensible.

Standard empiricism misidentifies a basic intellectual aim of natural science. It is not truth as such, but rather *explanatory truth*, truth presupposed to be explanatory.

But this aim is highly problematic. Precisely for this reason, it needs to be acknowledged explicitly within science, so that it can be critically assessed, and improved. In order to facilitate this, the problematic assumption or aim of science needs to be represented in the form of a hierarchy of assumptions and associated methods (aims and methods), assumptions becoming less and less substantial, and more and more such that their truth is required for the pursuit of knowledge to be possible at all, as one goes up the hierarchy. In this way a framework of relatively unproblematic assumptions and methods (aims and methods) is created within which much more specific, substantial and problematic assumptions and methods (aims and methods) can be critically assessed, and improved. As scientific knowledge improves, aims and methods improve as well. Knowledge-about-how-to-improve knowledge improves. The relationship between *science* and *philosophy of science* (aims and methods) is transformed. Philosophy of science becomes an integral part of science itself. There is something like positive feedback between improving knowledge and improving-knowledge-about-how-to-

improve-knowledge. This hierarchical, positive feedback conception of the progress-achieving methods of science I call *aim-oriented empiricism*.

(ii) Aim-oriented empiricism can be generalized to become *aim-oriented rationality*, potentially fruitfully applicable to any worthwhile human endeavour with problematic aims. For it is not just in science that aims are problematic; this is true in life too. Aim-oriented rationality requires that we represent the problematic aim of any worthwhile human endeavour – personal, institutional or global – in the form of a hierarchy of aims and associated methods, aims becoming less and less specific, and so less and less problematic, as one goes up the hierarchy. In this way, a framework of relatively unproblematic aims and methods is created within which much more specific and problematic aims and methods can be critically assessed and improved, as we act. As a result, we give ourselves the best hope of improving our problematic aims and methods as we live, in the light of success and failure, and imaginative and critical exploration of possibilities. There is the possibility that we might get into life some of the astonishing progressive success of science. Aim-oriented rationality is especially relevant when people have conflicting aims and ideals, in that it helps disentangle agreement and disagreement about aims.

(iii) A basic task of social inquiry and the humanities then becomes to help humanity build aim-oriented rationality into the fabric of personal, social and global life, into all our institutions other than science – into government, industry, commerce, agriculture, the media, the law, education, international relations, and into personal life as well. Above all, aim-oriented rationality is required when it comes to the task of making progress towards a good, civilized, wise world – the aim of this endeavour being, notoriously, profoundly problematic. Social inquiry is not primarily *science*, or the pursuit of *knowledge*: it is, rather, *social methodology*. What philosophy of science is to science (according to aim-oriented empiricism), so social inquiry is to social life (according to aim-oriented rationality). As a special case, the sociology of science *is* the philosophy of science.

Wisdom-inquiry, based on aim-oriented rationality, is the solution to the fundamental problem: What kind of inquiry can best help humanity learn how to make progress towards a good world?

Rationalism and Romanticism:

Many are hostile to the idea that all of life, personal and social, should become rational. But this hostility is directed, quite properly, at a characteristic kind of *irrationality* masquerading as rationality, associated with knowledge-inquiry. The above arguments for wisdom-inquiry transform, along the way, the whole way in which rationality is to be conceived. Aim-oriented rationality does not deprive us of our freedom by specifying what we must do; on the contrary, it enhances our freedom by enabling us to discover how to realize in life what is of most value. Again, aim-oriented rationality does not require us to attend exclusively to intellectual considerations, and ignore feelings and desires. How could we possibly discover what is of value if we do not attend to our feelings and

desires? But not everything that feels good is good, and not everything that we desire is desirable. In order to live in an aim-oriented rationalistic way, we need to interconnect intellect and feelings, mind and heart, so that we develop "mindful hearts and heartfelt minds". Aim-oriented rationalistic wisdom-inquiry is not the triumph of Rationalism over Romanticism. On the contrary, it is a synthesis of the two, and a great improvement over both.

Implications of the Two Arguments: Basic Features of Wisdom-Inquiry

The upshot of the above two arguments is that, in the interests of both reason and humanity, we urgently need to transform academia so that it puts wisdom-inquiry into practice. The revolution we need would change every branch and aspect of academic inquiry. A basic intellectual task of academic inquiry would be to articulate our problems of living (personal, social and global) and propose and critically assess possible solutions, possible actions, policies, political programmes, philosophies of life. This would be the task of social inquiry and the humanities. Tackling problems of knowledge would be secondary. Social inquiry would be at the heart of the academic enterprise, intellectually more fundamental than natural science. On a rather more long-term basis, social inquiry would be concerned to help humanity build cooperatively rational methods of problem-solving – aim-oriented rationality – into the fabric of social and political life, so that we may gradually acquire the capacity to resolve our conflicts and problems of living in more cooperatively rational ways than at present. Natural science would change to include three domains of discussion (in accordance with aim-oriented empiricism): evidence, theory, and aims - the latter including discussion of metaphysics, values and politics. Pursued for its own sake, science would be more like natural philosophy, intermingling science, metaphysics and philosophy as in the time of Newton. Academic inquiry as a whole would become a kind of people's civil service, doing openly for the public what actual civil services are supposed to do in secret for governments. Academia would actively seek to educate the public by means of discussion and debate, and would not just study the public. Above all academia, internationally, would be devoted to helping humanity learn what we need to do in response to the impending crisis of global warming. The intellectual/institutional revolution, from knowledge to wisdom, has dramatic consequences both for the internal structure and organization of academia, and for its relationship with the rest of the social world.

These changes are not arbitrary. They all come from demanding that academia cure its current structural irrationality, so that reason – the authentic article – may be devoted to promoting human welfare. The upshot – wisdom-inquiry – would put into the hands of humanity, for the first time, an instrument of learning rationally designed to help us realize what is of most value to us as we live – rationally designed to help us make progress towards a good world.

The Importance of Lively Intellectual Debate:

It would be unreasonable to expect all members of FOW to agree with all the details and implications of the two

arguments just sketched. The agreed basic task of FOW should be, I think, what I specified in the first paragraph of this article. However, it seems to me that FOW ought also to engage in a lively debate about what we should be trying to achieve. In particular, I would hope that the two arguments, spelled out above, and their implications, would receive fierce critical scrutiny. Or, if we assume in broad outline that academia needs to move from something that we might call "knowledge-inquiry" to something that we might call "wisdom-inquiry", we should debate issues about what exactly "wisdom-inquiry" amounts to. How do our universities need to change? What kind of inquiry do we really need? What can we do to begin to put wisdom-inquiry into practice? These are questions we want our fellow academics to take seriously, to discuss, ponder and explore. But how can we expect our colleagues to do this if we don't do it ourselves?

When FOW began in earnest, in the Summer of 2005, there was a surge of emailing debate – so much so, indeed, that some began to complain about the flood of emails, and others left FOW altogether. A part of the problem, perhaps, was that the debate ranged far and wide, and was not sufficiently focused on the issues FOW was set up to address. In an attempt to solve the problem, in June 2006 I set up the two emailing lists, the "D" list being devoted to discussion. Since then, debate has died down.

The Revolution is Underway

It is vital for us to appreciate that all sorts of developments and initiatives are at present taking place in universities which could be interpreted as steps towards wisdom-inquiry. Natural scientists have in the last five years or so, in the UK, created a number of centres and institutions concerned to tackle problems of climate change and the environment, interdisciplinary in character, and concerned to interact with the public, government, the media and industry.

www.tyndall.ac.uk/;
www.cei.group.cam.ac.uk/
http://www.ouce.ox.ac.uk/

Natural scientists have begun to appreciate that non-scientists need to be involved in debating questions of science policy. The Royal Society set up a 'Science in Society Programme' in 2000, with the aims of promoting 'dialogue with society', of involving 'society positively in influencing and sharing responsibility for policy on scientific matters', and of embracing 'a culture of openness in decision-making' which takes into account 'the values and attitudes of the public'.

http://royalsociety.org/page.asp?id=6975

A similar initiative is the 'science in society' research programme funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

http://www.sci-soc.net/SciSoc/

A number of departments, institutions and research centres have been formed during the last decade or so concerned with social policy, with problems of development, poverty, injustice and war, and with such matters as medical ethics and community health. In December of 2007, History and Policy was launched, a new initiative that seeks to bring together historians,

politicians and the media, and "works for better public policy through an understanding of history".

http://www.historyandpolicy.org/

In the USA, Germany and elsewhere, research into wisdom has been undertaken by psychologists and others, and there is now a flourishing literature on the subject. There is also the "teaching for wisdom" initiative in the USA, the idea being that whatever else is taught – science, history or mathematics – the teaching should be conducted in such a way that wisdom is acquired as well.

http://www.apa.org/science/ed-sternberg.html

It is interesting to note that, at the same time that a special issue of the *London Review of Education* appeared, in June 2007, devoted to the theme "Wisdom in the university" (which I co-edited with Ronald Barnett, and to which a number of Friends of Wisdom contributed), a special issue of another journal, *Social Epistemology*, also appeared with a related theme: "Wisdom in Management".

What Can FOW Do?

Here is a list of things that FOW might do.

1. Make contact with Departments, Centres, Institutions, Schools, Research Groups and individuals in Universities that seem to be putting some aspect of wisdom-inquiry into academic practice. Suggest to them that what they are doing is a part of a more comprehensive transformation taking place gradually in Universities, and indicate that we are actively engaged in trying to track down individuals and groups, from all branches of academic inquiry, who can be regarded as being a part of this transformation. Ask for help, for relevant information, and suggest they may find the webpage (or publication) we produce of interest. (David Morey has suggested we do something along these lines. Something of this can be found on the "What Needs to Change" page of our website. This needs to be developed further.)

2. Take up Bruce Lloyd's suggestion that we write to vice-chancellors of UK universities (and universities in other parts of the world as a parallel project) and ask: 'What role do you see for Wisdom in the educational strategy of your University, and Universities in general both in the UK and globally?' Or, perhaps, ask: 'What recent initiatives are there in your university that could be regarded as putting some aspect of wisdom-inquiry into practice?' The idea being that the answers should be put together in a published article.

3. Building on contacts made as a result of 1 and 2, FOW should host an international conference on an agreed FOW theme (such as "Do we need an academic revolution?").

4. Funds will be required if FOW is to host a conference. In order to facilitate getting funds, FOW should perhaps turn itself into a Society, with a constitution, Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and members. The ground work for this has already been done. As a result of earlier discussion, we have drawn up a constitution: all we need to do is to go through the process of agreeing to set up the FOW Society.

5. Individual members of FOW should continue to do what they can to spread the word about what FOW is attempting to achieve.

6. More work needs to be done on our website, especially on the "What Needs to Change" page. We also ought, perhaps, to have two new pages: one devoted to University Departments, Centres, etc., that can be regarded as putting some aspect of wisdom-inquiry into practice, the other devoted to exploring possible futures, good and bad.

7. We should come up with a list of specific changes that need to be made to academia to put wisdom-inquiry into practice – changes that no one else is advocating. Two candidates that have occurred to me:

(a) A "Science and Human Need Commission", which has the task of highlighting the mismatch that inevitably arises between the priorities of scientific research and the priorities of human need, and of proposing new research priorities and initiatives designed to lessen this mismatch.

(b) A Shadow Government within the university system which seeks to propose wise legislation and announce wise government actions, without power, free of the constraints and pressures of the actual government. The idea would be that nations have national Shadow Governments within their university system, and there is also an international Shadow Government charged with the task of proposing what a world government would do, and working out how an actual world government can be created.

Nick Maxwell

Changes Required to Turn Knowledge-Inquiry into Wisdom-Inquiry

(from N. Maxwell, *Is Science Neurotic?*, pp. 119-121)

1. There needs to be a change in the basic intellectual *aim* of inquiry, from the growth of knowledge to the growth of wisdom — wisdom being taken to be the capacity to realize what is of value in life, for oneself and others, and thus including knowledge, understanding and technological know-how.

2. There needs to be a change in the nature of academic *problems*, so that problems of living are included, as well as problems of knowledge. Furthermore, problems of living need to be treated as intellectually more fundamental than problems of knowledge.

3. There needs to be a change in the nature of academic *ideas*, so that proposals for action are included as well as claims to knowledge. Furthermore, proposals for action need to be treated as intellectually more fundamental than claims to knowledge.

4. There needs to be a change in what constitutes intellectual *progress*, so that progress-in-ideas-relevant-to-achieving-a-more-civilized-world is included as well as progress in knowledge, the former being indeed intellectually fundamental.

5. There needs to be a change in the idea as to where inquiry, at its most fundamental, is located. It is not esoteric theoretical physics, but rather the thinking we engage in as we seek to achieve what is of value in life.

6. There needs to be a dramatic change in the nature of social inquiry (reflecting points 1 to 5). Economics, politics, sociology, and so on, are not, fundamentally, *sciences*, and do not, fundamentally, have the task of improving knowledge about social phenomena. Instead, their task is threefold. First, it is to articulate problems of living, and propose and critically assess possible solutions, possible actions or policies, from the standpoint of their capacity, if implemented, to promote wiser ways of living. Second, it is to promote such cooperatively rational tackling of problems of living throughout the social world. And third, at a more basic and long-term level, it is to help build the hierarchical structure of aims and methods of aim-oriented rationality into personal, institutional and global life, thus creating frameworks within which progressive improvement of personal and social life aims-and-methods becomes possible. These three tasks are undertaken in order to promote cooperative tackling of problems of living — but also in order to enhance empathic or "personalistic" understanding between people as something of value in its own right. Acquiring knowledge of social phenomena is a subordinate activity, engaged in to facilitate the above three fundamental pursuits.

7. Natural science needs to change, so that it includes at least three levels of discussion: evidence, theory, and research aims. Discussion of aims needs to bring together scientific, metaphysical and evaluative consideration in an attempt to discover the most desirable and realizable research aims.

8. There needs to be a dramatic change in the relationship between social inquiry and natural science, so that social inquiry becomes intellectually more fundamental from the standpoint of tackling problems of living, promoting wisdom.

9. The way in which academic inquiry as a whole is related to the rest of the human world needs to change dramatically. Instead of being intellectually dissociated from the rest of society, academic inquiry needs to be communicating with, learning from, teaching and arguing with the rest of society — in such a way as to promote cooperative rationality and social wisdom. Academia needs to have just sufficient power to retain its independence from the pressures of government, industry, the military, and public opinion, but no more. Academia becomes a kind of civil service for the

public, doing openly and independently what actual civil services are supposed to do in secret for governments.

10. There needs to be a change in the role that political and religious ideas, works of art, expressions of feelings, desires and values have within rational inquiry. Instead of being excluded, they need to be explicitly included and critically assessed, as possible indications and revelations of what is of value, and as unmasking of fraudulent values in satire and parody, vital ingredients of wisdom.

11. There need to be changes in education so that, for example, seminars devoted to the cooperative, imaginative and critical discussion of problems of living are at the heart of all education from five-year-olds onwards. Politics, which cannot be taught by knowledge-inquiry, becomes central to wisdom-inquiry, political creeds and actions being subjected to imaginative and critical scrutiny.

12. There need to be changes in the aims, priorities and character of pure science and scholarship, so that it is the curiosity, the seeing and searching, the knowing and understanding of individual persons that ultimately matters, the more impersonal, esoteric, purely intellectual aspects of science and scholarship being means to this end. Social inquiry needs to give intellectual priority to helping empathic understanding between people to flourish (as indicated in 6 above).

13. There need to be changes in the way mathematics is understood, pursued and taught. Mathematics is not a branch of knowledge at all. Rather, it is concerned to explore problematic *possibilities*, and to develop, systematize and unify problem-solving methods.

14. Literature needs to be put close to the heart of rational inquiry, in that it explores imaginatively our most profound problems of living and aids personalistic understanding in life by enhancing our ability to enter imaginatively into the problems and lives of others.

15. Philosophy needs to change so that it ceases to be just another specialized discipline and becomes instead that aspect of inquiry as a whole that is concerned with our most general and fundamental problems — those problems that cut across all disciplinary boundaries. Philosophy needs to become again what it was for Socrates: the attempt to devote reason to the growth of wisdom in life.

Account of Friends of Wisdom Meeting in London on 15 March 2008

Present: Dennis Bury, Brian Cariss, Colin Feltham, Ian Glendinning, Mathew Iredale, Bruce Lloyd, Nicholas Maxwell, Geoffrey Read, Harvey Sarles, Niall Scott.

Nick opened the discussion with a few introductory remarks. He proposed that they should not worry about keeping too strictly to the Agenda. He suggested two basic questions should be discussed, namely:

(1) What should the aim of FOW) be?

(2) What should FOW do?

In response to (1), Nick suggested that the aim should be to get wisdom-inquiry put into practice in schools and universities throughout the world. Or, slightly more modestly and realistically, it should be to get into the public arena the idea that we urgently need to put wisdom-inquiry into practice in schools and universities throughout the world.

In response to (2), Nick suggested that, whatever we do, we should try to get some publicity for it, and take that aspect of the task into account. We should also take into account that, in recent years, a number of changes have taken place in the natural sciences, and in other departments of academia, that could be interpreted as first steps towards putting wisdom-inquiry into practice. He went on to suggest that FOW should perhaps set up a big international conference with some such theme as "How Can Universities Best Help Humanity Create a Better World?". And a number of other suggestions for action were indicated.

An extraordinarily wide-ranging, lively and wholly friendly discussion ensued. The discussion was both wholly serious and conducted with much laughter. There was some discussion of other organizations that had aims similar to those of FOW. Science for Global Responsibility, Science for Humanity, History and Policy, and Pugwash were mentioned. The readiness of natural scientists to accept that the public should be involved in discussing science policy, in connection with problematic new developments such as nanotechnology, was discussed. Cop Macdonald's "Wisdom Page" was mentioned, as well as the World Wisdom Council. The importance of getting into touch with such organizations and developments, and indicating that they were perhaps a part of a broader trend, was stressed. The question of how to get into touch with students was also discussed. Could this be done via Facebook and MySpace?

There was some discussion of how the spirit of the 60s had been lost sight of, and replaced by concern for careers and income. Despite the inspiring idea of the 60s that life is for living, and the world really can be changed for the better, a certain lack of realism and anti-intellectualism led to its collapse. Harvey, however, stressed that the 60s had left a lasting legacy in the US in connection with the Civil Rights movement, opposition to the Vietnam War, and Feminism.

Abruptly, we realized we had not introduced ourselves properly, so we went round giving a brief indication of our life, work and concerns.

In connection with deciding what the aims of FOW should be, Nick suggested that the fissure in FOW as a whole was reproduced to some extent – but in a wholly friendly way – in our meeting. On the one hand, there were those who saw the main task to be to get academia to take up and implement wisdom-inquiry. On the other hand there were those who saw the main task to be to get universities to take wisdom seriously. The latter might involve learning what wisdom is, what various traditions hold wisdom to be, what examples of wise people are to be found in the past, and also teaching in such a way that, whatever is being taught – physics, economics, history – the teaching is conducted in such a way that wisdom is also acquired. (Robert Sternberg's "teaching for wisdom" programme was mentioned.) It was pointed out that these two concerns, "universities implementing wisdom-inquiry" and "universities taking wisdom seriously", overlap but are also different, in some respects. Universities might come to take wisdom seriously, in both teaching and research, and yet not implement wisdom-inquiry. On the other hand, implementation of wisdom-inquiry might not lead to some of the teaching and research that those interested in a more traditional idea of wisdom might favour. There was general agreement that we could live with this difference of emphasis. Bruce said that opposition to wisdom stemmed in part from its association with religion, in part from the use of the word "wisdom" in the phrase "the received wisdom". The "guru" aspect of wisdom was discussed, there being too many well-known cases of false gurus having disastrous consequences for their followers. There was also discussion of the association of "knowledge" with rationalism and the Enlightenment, "wisdom" with anti-rationalist attitudes and Romanticism. The profound irrationality of pursuing knowledge dissociated from wisdom needs to be more broadly appreciated, by both "Rationalists" and "Romantics".

This led on to teaching, and a discussion of a "problem solving" approach to teaching, and Karl Popper. The vital importance of enabling students to speak, to develop their own narratives, and to discover how to transform a sense of bafflement into an articulated problem, was discussed.

Someone suggested that FOW might create podcasts of wisdom-inquiry courses, and make them available on the internet. There was some discussion of the idea that FOW should create a virtual university that put wisdom-inquiry into practice. It was agreed that this would not help much with the task of getting the message of FOW into the public arena.

The question of how FOW could get into touch with simpatico individuals in academia was discussed, but no definite answer was forthcoming. Colin asked who was FOW *for*? For humanity, came the response. Yes, but who needed what FOW had to offer? Everyone! Yes, but who was aware of this need? Ah, there lay the problem. Faced as we all are by intensifying global problems – global warming,

population growth, war and the threat of war, environmental degradation and extinction of species, etc. – it is desperately important that humanity learns how to tackle its problems in more cooperatively rational ways than at present, and this in turn requires that we have schools and universities devoted to the task. The basic message of FOW is of profound importance for the future of humanity but, alas, there is very little awareness of any such thing at present. This is the problem, the task, confronting FOW: to create awareness of this need both within and without universities.

It was agreed that FOW would need to do many different things in an attempt to get its basic message across. The suggestion was made that FOW should be encouraged to report by means of emails their efforts, both their successes and failures, in attempting to get aspects of the message of FOW across. Ian suggested that we should do this by means of a Blog, or something similar, so that a readily accessible record of accounts of FoW activities could be made available. (As it is, a record is maintained of all emails sent to the two FOW emailing lists – but perhaps this could be done in a more accessible form.) The possibility of FOW holding virtual conferences, perhaps by means of Skype, was mentioned. The idea of a big international conference was again mooted, and Niall suggested that, instead, we might set up a series of "wisdom workshops", each one in a different location, each one devoted to a different aspect of the problem. This was thought quite generally to be a very good idea. It was agreed that the first one might be in London, ideally in the Institute of Education. A steering group was formed, consisting of Bruce, Niall and Nick. It was suggested that one such workshop might discuss the implications of wisdom-inquiry for different disciplines – physics, history, sociology, economics, and so on. (Nick confessed he had long planned to write a book about just that, with the title "Implications of Wisdom"). We had some discussion of economics. Someone else suggested that we needed a short book outlining the basic message of FOW. Niall suggested that we should produce a Manifesto, and mentioned that the Manifesto of the Futurist movement in Russia had been enormously important and influential in its time. Another person made the point that ideas could often be most effectively communicated by means of the arts: drama, film, podcasts, broadcasts, cartoons.

Nick Maxwell

Suggestions for things FOW might do that emerged from the London Meeting of 15 March 2008

1. Establish a series of one-day seminars or workshops in different localities, each devoted to a different aspect of the basic FOW theme.

2. Set up a big, open, international conference with some such theme as "How can Universities Best Help Humanity Create a Better World?"

3. Start up a campaign to create a seminar within each university devoted to the discussion of global problems.

4. Make contact with organizations with aims related to ours.

5. Make contact with departments in universities engaged in wisdom-inquiry activities.

6. Seek out and get into touch with individuals in academia who are engaged in wisdom-inquiry activities (research, teaching, administration, publicity) from the natural and technological sciences to the social sciences, the humanities and administration.

7. Get into touch with ministers, politicians, science and education correspondents of newspapers, radio and TV, and others, and put across the case for wisdom-inquiry.

8. Form ourselves into a Society, with a constitution, chair, secretary, and committee – in part to help obtain funds for a conference, in part to help get publicity for FOW.

9. Encourage members of FOW to email their attempts at getting our message across – perhaps creating a Blog to record such attempts, whether successful or not.

10. Pursue wisdom-inquiry research, on an individual basis and in cooperation with others, and publish the results.

11. Develop the FOW website. Especially "What Needs to Change", links to simpatico organizations, and possibly a new web page on possible futures.

12. Stimulate discussion of wisdom-inquiry problems and issues on the FOW emailing list.

13. Hold FOW Skype Conferences.

14. Write letters to newspapers, and contribute to email discussion groups.

Morality, Inquiry and the University

By Roger Mourad

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Higher education in the United States is a prominent social institution that is highly productive in terms of research that reveals the extent of human suffering due to poverty and other conditions and that proposes interventions. However, despite the research, enhanced access to higher education, teaching about social problems, and advocacy undertaken by some scholars, massive suffering persists, even in the wealthiest country in the world.

If higher education is to truly confront the extent of suffering due to poverty and other conditions in the world, it is important to consider what it means for higher education to be a socially responsible institution amidst massive suffering, and this question is a moral question. To think about this question is to delve into the question of the meaning of morality in higher education, or more fundamentally, because the production of knowledge is an outcome of *inquiry*, the relationship of inquiry to morality.

Faculty work implies a practical ethos, a moral imperative, based on a tripartite of value: social, institutional, and in its most concrete, embodied form, individual or human. By social value, I mean that academic research and teaching refers to the fact that these activities are considered by both its practitioners and publicly elected government officials to be beneficial to society. Scholars generally believe that the sum of inquiry yields significant benefits that generally contribute toward making civilizations 'better,' even though many particular discoveries do not themselves have useful practical applications, or may positively affect the quality of life of only a very small number of people in relatively minor ways.

By institutional value of higher education, I mean that as a basic social institution, higher education is about a fundamental good, namely, knowledge and education. Institutional leaders and professional associations in higher education constantly express its importance in moral terms. Academic conferences are nearly always centered on themes in the form of 'calls to action' that place the discipline or field in an ethical context. Finally, by human good, I mean that the very nature of faculty work is a manifestation of what it means to realize one's potential. The pursuit of knowledge is valued by scholars for its own sake. Scholars may choose a scholarly life for different reasons, but one common motivation is the love of a subject, and a desire to be a part of a community of

colleagues who share this intrinsic interest. There is also the desire to cultivate this deep appreciation of learning with students who have burgeoning intellects.

The foregoing points are meant only to introduce the notion that inquiry is a value-laden activity that embodies a basic concern for human well being, such that one is justified in considering the idea of a relation between inquiry and morality. There are sustained efforts by many scholars to work toward social change through associations such as the Union of Concerned Scientists. However, the extent of suffering calls for a foundational approach to the relation between morality and inquiry. This means reconceiving inquiry. Nicholas Maxwell argues in numerous works that the original intent of Enlightenment philosophers, to make inquiry produce the good society, has been compromised by a legacy of defective reasoning about the nature of inquiry (c.f. Maxwell 1987, 1992, 2002, 2004). The basis of inquiry in practice he calls the "philosophy of knowledge,' the belief that the proper way for rational inquiry to help humanity build a better world is for inquiry to 'restrict itself to the aim of improving knowledge and technological know-how.' (Maxwell 1992: 208)

In contrast, inquiry that proceeded according to a 'philosophy of wisdom' would have the basic task of improving society by seeking to discover what is of value in life and through articulating, proposing, and critically assessing possible solutions to their realization (219). In words that bring Alfred North Whitehead and John Dewey to mind, Maxwell says that under this philosophy, 'our lives, our actions, are rational to the extent that we are able to exploit to our best advantage what we can already do in order to do new things so as to solve new problems.' (220) Viewed in these terms, academic inquiry has 'the basic task of helping us to gradually develop a more cooperatively rational world.' (221)

To implement this philosophy, Maxwell argues that there needs to be a change in the nature of what we consider to be problems for academic inquiry so that problems of living are most fundamental, and proposals for action are included instead of just knowledge claims. Social inquiry, which has the basic task of articulating, proposing, and assessing possible solutions to social problems, needs to be positioned as the most fundamental area of inquiry, more fundamental than the natural sciences (223).

Maxwell's position on value, inquiry, and knowledge can occur only if scholars as a community confront the dissonance between the achievement ethos that pervades the scholarly profession and human suffering. There are reasons why the philosophy of knowledge is prominent in higher education while the philosophy of wisdom is nearly absent that go beyond the 'blunders of Enlightenment reason.' (Maxwell 2000) The greatest obstacle to confrontation with the massive suffering that exists in the shadow of scholarship is that the fervor to produce knowledge drives intellectual inquiry--and scholars are mainly responsible for this condition. This condition pervades higher education because scholars desire to produce

knowledge and it is their acquiescence, and cooperation, that has institutionalized this desire in their behavior, even many want knowledge to improve the world.

The kind of intellectual activity that is needed to fundamentally change the nature of inquiry in the way that Maxwell calls for, would demand collaboration by scholars who could contribute their various areas of expertise to cause permanent change on a broad scale. Given the modern establishment of knowledge, fundamental change demands collective effort and organization by scholars to coordinate and work together. Undoubtedly there would be divisions among faculty along ideological lines, but academic life is already highly politicized. At a minimum, collective effort requires a basic shift in the general orientation of what are currently highly individualized work practices. Despite the increase in collaborative work in recent years, the paradigm of attainment in academia is an attainment by an individual, even if the inquiry involves multiple individuals. This arrangement serves the maintenance of the social status quo that tolerates massive suffering because it divides scholars into individuals. The perpetuation of myriad particularistic inquiries, each going in its own direction, is a highly effective means of pacifying intellects.

Most importantly, this status quo serves dominant interests by pacifying moral reason through the short-term gratification that is experienced by individual knowledge producers in the academic profession. There is marginal change and the essential reality of stasis. This mass of ever-shifting knowledge production cannot possibly cope with the scale of human degradation in society. The perpetual deferment of confrontation with mass suffering that is afforded by this arrangement is a pacification of moral reason that can be fought through only by collections of scholars. Changing the course of reason so that aims are clarified is not simply a matter of making corrections in the conceptualization of inquiry at the institutional level because there are values embodied in the pursuit of knowledge that are in the professional self-interest of scholars.

In the United States, inquiry became a production in the twentieth century after it lost a relation with morality in the nineteenth and that the primary movers in this production are scholars themselves (Barrow 1990; Reuben 1996; Roberts and Turner 2000). Just as these changes came about because of the interests of scholars, so too, any fundamental change in the relation between morality and inquiry must be driven by scholars in their work--not merely as private citizens. This shift means moving away from the emphasis on professional and personal achievement that pervades the profession and directing action toward confrontation with the conditions of mass suffering that exist now and that are not adequately addressed by the mass production of knowledge.

Morality and inquiry need to have a broad-based relation that is directed at social human suffering. It is insufficient for this relationship to be confined to small compartments in various fields of inquiry as the modern formulation presents—just as it is insufficient for the ameliorization of suffering to be merely an indirect,

distant goal of higher education as a social institution. Maxwell's critique allows us to see that there can be other ways of thinking about inquiry. The extent and persistence of suffering calls for action that is morally responsive to this condition; action that is limited to the efforts at local levels is not sufficient relative to the scope of suffering and the scope of resources that are expended in the institutionalized production of knowledge. Collaborative action must be organized and directed at both the structure of society and the structure of knowledge if inquiry is to have a meaningful relation to morality.

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PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

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Taylor ordained in his The Principles of Scientific Management that in the past man had been first; in the future the system must be first. And so he sowed the seed for a living hell for thousands and millions of people on earth. Including those who would seek a law abiding way of life with due deference to their fellow creatures. This was a form of inappropriate rationality and pseudo-science to provide the servitude of men and women both to physical machines and the machinery of organisation built on this premise of machine superiority. Again it is suggested that it is a causal reason for the well researched and documented phenomena of work place bullying.

Taylor states, in the same work, that the principal object of management should be to secure the maximum prosperity for the employer, coupled with the maximum prosperity for each employee. Some one hundred years later we are starting to evaluate the cost to society in the deterioration of our environment and general social fabric of this objective being given precedence. Harry Braverman in the seventies questions whether within monopoly capitalism or communism there is any attempt to maximise benefit to an employee. That is the cost to society of organisations making societal decisions which favour their own maximisation of benefit.

Parsons in the late fifties discusses the mutual advantage of two-way flow of theory and how this is disadvantaged by the principle of powerful divisive factors which tend to isolate sister disciplines. Indeed this then deplores the fact that in the beginning of that century economics and sociology drifted further apart. He raised the suggestion that this trend to the divergence of these subject matters should be reversed. Even in those early years of what we call business academia he stated that neither the economist nor the behavioural scientist can afford to ignore what lies over the boundaries of his discipline. And so we have the inevitable seeds of complexity understanding contained within the then modern linear scientific management which was at the forefront of knowledge at that time.

This academic stance born in a linear framework correlates with amazing exactitude to that of the complexity theorist Waldrop asserted at the end of the last century. Waldrop is concerned that the fragmentation process of science whereby the traditional disciplines had become entrenched and so isolated from each other to

such an extent that they seemed to be strangling each other. Two decades on the normal modern University has entrenched this even further into it the delivery of knowledge in the establishment of a unitised form of teaching subject matter by breaking it down into separately delivered and examined modules. It is not suggested that that is wrong per se because that is yet another subject to be discussed separately. However, it has the effect by its very physicality of fragmenting academics, subjects and hence knowledge into further and continued entrenchment. However, the real world is not so neatly parcelled up into globules of discrete packaged facts. Real world living knowledge is complexly interrelated in a continuous mix of ever changing meaning. The discreteness of the parcelling of knowledge contained within the modularisation of the modern university may aid its administration and bureaucracy; however it is of little help to those who then enter into a real world containing a morass of messy undifferentiated real world experience: a world where neat linearity does not apply.

The inherent danger is that complexity will be turned inappropriately into yet another Newtonian discrete parcel of facts. This would neuter and render invisible, incommunicable and irrelevant its intrinsic meaning and helpfulness to real world participants.

The research cry generally is for more drilling down into an area of total irrelevance to the average member of society. The moral of Waldrop is that the lesson of Santa Fe and Chaos Theory are very slow to be learnt and have not been practically implemented to any great extent. Humankind will continue to be the loser of myopic forms of knowledge that are losing relevance daily almost as quickly as words are being committed to academic paper. This is not very different to Marx in a classic work who suggested that the bourgeoisie had sounded the death knell of scientific bourgeois economy by not considering if a theorem was true or not but considering its benefit to capital or simply whether it was politically dangerous. Complexity and Chaos Theory is indeed potentially "dangerous" to both Monopoly Capitalism and Communism and hence one wonder's if Marx assertion lives on today in a very different culture and political scene which is similar in that it has its strong and powerful adherents to the status quo.

For those who remember the late evening especially written for TV Plays in the sixties this is deliberately of the same nature. There are deliberately no conclusions. As the Moody Blues said around that era, there are more questions than answers. However it is time to reassess the benefits of the linear assumptions of efficiency to society of so called scientific management. The logical place to start seems to be where the foundation of wisdom is laid in society and that is within academia.

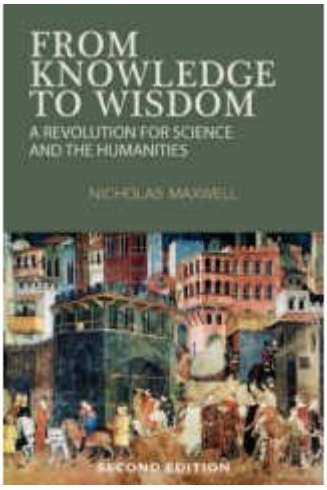
Nicholas Maxwell cries out for a revolution within academic inquiry:

"We need a revolution in the aims and methods of academic inquiry. Instead of giving priority to the search for knowledge, academia needs to devote itself to seeking and promoting wisdom by rational means, wisdom being the capacity to realize what is of value in life, for oneself and others,

wisdom thus including knowledge but much else besides. A basic task ought to be to help humanity learn how to create a better world."

Complexity thinking has been used above to give yet another cry out for the looking again towards and the revering of wisdom. Perhaps, at the very minimum, wisdom requires the association of knowledge and experience in a broad and holistic manner. It is suggested for further discussion that the current predominantly Newtonian drill-down, fragmented approach to knowledge creation and teaching obviates the natural process of wisdom. Individuals need wisdom for their personal benefit. However we are in the calamitous situation that humanity and globalised society needs wisdom to solve self inflicted fatal wounds that are insoluble with a current academic approach. Nicholas Maxwell is absolutely right to cry out for wisdom in academic inquiry.

BOOK REVIEWS OF NICK MAXWELL'S "FROM KNOWLEDGE TO WISDOM" SECOND EDITION



A REVOLUTION FOR SCIENCE AND THE HUMANITIES

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http://www.amazon.co.uk/Knowledge-Wisdom-Revolution-Science-Humanities/dp/0955224004/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1206376823&sr=8-1

By Avinash Jha

Transforming Science:
Nicholas Maxwell is perhaps the only philosopher of science who articulates the 'double nature' of science as a knowledge enterprise and offers a definite resolution. He seeks to account for both the noble and the ignoble in science, both the pure and the applied. Unlike numerous other critics and defenders of science, who only offer us the choice of either accepting science or rejecting science as it is, what Maxwell offers is a way of transforming science. The breakthrough that "From Knowledge to Wisdom" made consisted in identification of a philosophy of knowledge, which serves as the guiding framework for organised systematic inquiry. This philosophy of knowledge is at the core of the way science has been practiced and represented since the enlightenment (he names it 'the philosophy of knowledge' which may be misleading, since there may be other philosophies of knowledge or guiding frameworks which reject 'the philosophy of knowledge').[1] Once this philosophy of knowledge has been identified, it becomes possible to imagine a transformation of science through a transformation of this guiding framework. Whether such a transformation is possible in the current institutional setting, which is in the throes of an entirely different kind of change, is another question, to which we return towards the end.

As noted by Maxwell, science protected itself from any critical discussion of its own aims and methods by simply refusing to accept the existence of any such guiding framework. Was this denial on the part of science a logical result of

[1] For example, see Barry Allen's "Knowledge and Civilization" (Westview Press, 2004). There will be numerous other philosophies associated with various traditions of knowledge that have existed or exist in society.

adherence to 'the philosophy of knowledge'? It does not seem that following the tenet of 'the philosophy of knowledge' that rational inquiry should be devoted in the first instance to the achievement of knowledge leads to the denial we are referring to. Why and when questions regarding what ought to be the aims and methods of inquiry become illegitimate? They were not so for Galileo, Bacon and even Newton. Maxwell's characterization of 'the philosophy of knowledge' as an intellectual blunder is at best a partial answer. Institutional and cultural demands made upon the newly organised system of inquiry in the 19th century were at least equally important. These social forces shaping the transition of natural philosophy into science join with the intellectual blunders to create the necessity for a philosophical denial. Some have interpreted this as a Faustian bargain that knowledge made with power, whereby scientists bought the freedom of inquiry at the cost of complete powerlessness with regard to the uses of knowledge.

A New Rationalism:

Philosophy of wisdom is the impressive and cogent alternative framework for the practice of organised cooperative inquiry that Maxwell offers. It is not only supposed to be ethically superior but also intellectually more demanding and satisfying. Maxwell's philosophy of wisdom is breathtaking in its conception and in its philosophical ambition. It accords full epistemic status to all human beings, and not only to scientists. It reconfigures the relationship between specialized cooperative inquiry and personal quest. The ultimate context of knowledge is found to lie in ordinary living. It is written in the best British tradition of clarity and logical rigor.

Indeed, the centrality of reason and rationality is the continuity his perspective shares with 'the philosophy of knowledge'. It seems to share in the assumption that the necessities operating in life can best be overcome by rational means. Maxwell expands the scope of rational inquiry to include the realization of all values. Rationality, now redefined as primarily the rationality of cooperative action, is the supreme instrument for realization of value in life, and not only of intellectual value. Rationality is better articulation, discussion, and cooperation. In fact, for Maxwell, the most fundamental criticism of 'the philosophy of knowledge' is that it is irrationality in the garb of rationality.

There may at first appear to be no bounds to rationality in his exposition. But Maxwell constructs a beautifully nuanced distinction between the power and the scope of reason (see p. 99-101). In this conception, rationality is not a 'force', which dictates choices, but an aid to decisions about realization of values. Philosophy of wisdom expands the scope of reason to cover all that is possibly of value in life, while acknowledging its limited power. Aim-oriented rationality is the general formulation of this new rationalism. All human aims are essentially problematic; aims, and methods for attaining them, need to be reappraised and reassessed in a kind of mutual feedback. Maxwell is able to reinterpret and address in more adequate ways several outstanding problems of philosophy of science with the help of this conception. More ambitiously, "cooperative aim-oriented rationalism provides a

framework within which diverse philosophies of value may be cooperatively assessed and tested against the experience of personal and social life" (p. 275). One however gets the impression from this book that the *institutional* site for such cooperative activities is primarily the university (including research institutes). It seems to me that such cooperative activity should be a part of all institutional settings.

I was puzzled by the absence of an exposition of the irrational in the book. The major example of irrationality which the book discusses is 'the philosophy of knowledge', which is irrationality masquerading as rationality. Then we come across the generalization (p.103): "A conception of reason can be said to be defective or irrational if it can be shown to lead us *systematically* astray"; and further, the notion of rationalistic neurosis whereby the real aims of our endeavours are suppressed from awareness. Could it be that the irrational is conceived essentially as a perversion of rationality? Is irrational a double of rationality which it has to continuously guard against? Then reason does not have to wage a war on irrationality; it rather has the task of correcting itself. It is some such humility of reason that allows it to aid in the growth of wisdom, which is regarded by Maxwell to be the aim of all inquiry.

From 'Knowledge' to Wisdom:

One would suppose that wisdom (or the growth of wisdom), like all human aims, must be regarded as intrinsically problematic. And the efficacy of reason in this regard needs to be assessed from time to time. Philosophy of wisdom that Maxwell offers must be regarded as *a* philosophy of wisdom and not as *the* philosophy of wisdom. This is not always clear in the exposition made in this book. After all, as Maxwell's philosophy would recognize, wisdom has existed in the world and exists even now in life and society. Wisdom exists in science too even if it is thwarted wisdom. Maxwell's unique contribution lies in formulating a philosophy of wisdom that may serve as a better framework for cooperative organised inquiry for our age. Primary aim of Maxwell's inquiry is to bring about 'a revolution for science and humanities' as the sub-title of the second edition of "From Knowledge to Wisdom" proclaims.

This brings us to what I regard as a major a defect of this book, to which I briefly alluded earlier. Throughout the book Maxwell uses 'knowledge' in the sense of objective knowledge in the sense given to it by standard empiricist philosophy of science, i.e., in the sense of 'the philosophy of knowledge'. It is a very specific sense of knowledge associated with modern science. But when he critiques this 'knowledge' he implies himself to be critiquing knowledge in general. While one can argue that this is the dominant sense of knowledge in the Anglo-American academic traditions, the way 'knowledge' is used in ordinary English language is much broader and varied. Moreover, it is also used in English language to translate all conceivable concepts of knowledge that may have existed and exists and may exist in future in traditions and languages worldwide. In the articulation of his philosophy of wisdom, he takes himself to be refuting the claims of any philosophy of knowledge as opposed to

philosophy of wisdom. This also communicates, without explicitly stating, that 'the philosophy of knowledge' is in some way the most advanced representation of the case for knowledge. This is not something one can assume. Similar considerations apply to his discussion of 'truth' though this concept is not central in the book.

Giving up 'the philosophy of knowledge' requires giving up its assessment of various other knowledge traditions as well. A potentially rich field of inquiry is opened up in the form of a reassessment of various knowledge traditions that have existed in the past, in other cultures, and in society even within the western culture. Maxwell's philosophy of wisdom does indeed provide us with a perspective and some tools for undertaking this inquiry.

The manner in which the conceptual and rhetorical structure of 'the philosophy of wisdom/the philosophy of knowledge' duality is employed by Maxwell it leads to a corresponding 'knowledge/wisdom' duality, which to my mind is not valid outside the limited confines of standard empiricism. While Maxwell includes knowledge within the broader category of wisdom, he assumes that knowledge or the concept of knowledge is necessarily devoid of wisdom. This is an assumption of standard empiricism. If standard empiricism is not beholden to us we can well say that: he knows how to live; or, she knows how to do good science. One may find in many philosophical traditions that wisdom is included in knowledge. In Indian traditions, you will find *vidya* and *avidya*, which denote the right kind of knowledge and the wrong kind of knowledge. *Vidya* would include wisdom. I am sure there would be similar European traditions.

We can indeed say that philosophy of wisdom offers a much better *philosophy of knowledge* for guiding the activities of university or organised academic inquiry. We cannot expect our universities to deliver us wisdom. Even when they suggest wise social action through their inquiries, which is informed by philosophy of wisdom, it will be in a theoretical form. We will still require wisdom in order to apply or implement those suggestions. The university may act with wisdom, or embody wisdom, in its own area of activities, which are knowledge-related activities like research and education.

If the kind of issues discussed above is not clarified, philosophy of wisdom may lead to another, more devastating, rationalistic neurosis. Imagine MIT, Harvard, Cambridge, Oxford and JNU adopting 'the philosophy of wisdom' as official policy. Authority of these institutions that has been built upon their excellence in producing 'knowledge' may now be easily translated into the authority of solutions they offer for the social problems of life. This will be facilitated by the way Maxwell's book implicitly cedes all authority in matters of knowledge to science and the university. Now the researchers will apply their skills of producing 'knowledge' in producing 'wisdom'. This is not to say that change is not possible in the academy. Change may perhaps come from creating spaces for

non-institutional inquiries within institutional spaces of the university.

Knowledge and Wisdom in the Information Age:

Maxwell wrote his book in 1984. 'The philosophy of knowledge' was probably at the height of its influence at the time. The second edition published in 2007 provides in addition an assessment of developments since then which can be said to exemplify a movement 'from knowledge to wisdom'. In this period however, we have witnessed another movement of global significance that can be characterized as a movement 'from knowledge to information'.[2]

It seems to me that we cannot simply understand this as an explosion of communication technology, or as a revolution in communication of knowledge. The knowledge which cannot be so communicated and organised using new information technology may begin to loose the status of genuine and valuable knowledge. Knowledge and inquiry seems now more closely tied to the production of economic value through the mediation of 'information', understood as digital representations of knowledge. Knowledge society is bringing about a new organization of knowledge and knowledge activities. Modes of finance, organization, evaluation are changing. Witness the massive changes in the university and research institutions. Software, IT, law, finance, management constitute the New Knowledge which attracts the brightest students and heaviest investments. In fact, science no longer enjoys the highest status in the field of knowledge. Knowledge society is interested in all kinds of knowledge, including those that had been rejected earlier as falling short in rationality. One might even conjecture that a new concept of knowledge is in the making.

There are changes internal to sciences and inquiry as well. The category of 'information' has been making its home in the explanatory structures of many sciences – physics, economics, biology, linguistics, and so on.[3] Technologies of virtuality have become increasingly embedded in design of inquiry and in their evaluation. 'Digital humanities' has begun attracting major funding bodies.

What do these developments bode for the world and for wisdom inquiry? The fundamental drive of information age seems to be to dissociate knowledge from its personal and social contexts and make it available, or restrict its availability, in digitally organised form – whether it is the knowledge of employees in a company, knowledge of tribes in far off places, or inventions of scientists. We are encouraged to relate to all knowledge, including our own, for its capacity to produce economic value. Philosophy of wisdom does indeed give us a valuable philosophy for organised inquiry and a new imagination of knowledge in society,

[2] Vidya Ashram at Varanasi (www.vidyaashram.org), with which I am associated, has organised a series of 'Dialogues on Knowledge in Society' to explore the philosophical and political meaning of this transition. Please look under the heading 'Dialogues on…' on the website for contributions on this topic.

[3] For a detailed examination of the science of economics from this angle, see Philip Mirowski's "Digital Dreams: Economics becomes a Cyborg Science" (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

but it has now 'the philosophy of information' to contend with. Just as 'philosophy of knowledge' was represented as the emblem of rationality, 'information' comes to us as a friend. The question is: is 'the philosophy of information' a friend of wisdom?

By Harvey Sarles

Nick Maxwell's recently republished book – "From Knowledge to Wisdom" – may be reaching its time. First published a quarter century ago, it got many good reviews. But its ideas didn't "go" much of anywhere in terms of thinking or practice; a palliative with little action; a "feel-good" approach which we could ignore until…right now - says Nick.

Nick asserts that we are heirs of earlier ideas, committed to the exploration of the universe, but without the thoughtful (moral) bases which gives philosophy and life its groundings and meanings. Philosophical knowledge has taken us far and wide, but…leaves the human condition with little more than promises of the ultimate utility of that knowledge. It contributes little to the "best hope of helping us progressively to resolve our most urgent problems of living…a more humane, a more just, a happier, a saner and more cooperative world."

As the book takes us from several century old ideas of knowledge to the "needs" of the current era, Nick guides us through the history of thought which has dominated (philosophical) knowledge then and endures to the present moment: what is the universe, how do we study it, how do we know, what is truth? We have come far, in many senses, but now seem to be at some impasses.

He urges us to rethink where we are, how we got here, and the deep necessity to broaden our explorations toward (philosophical) wisdom, rather than being bound to particular and narrow historical ideas of what knowledge consists in.

Wisdom is the perspective that how we go about thinking and pursuing knowledge must include its effects on and implications for the human condition. In so many senses, knowledge has "overstepped" itself, and has endangered our very existence: e.g., the blights of the 20th century - holocausts, atomic bombs, GMOs, and so much more.

As important, we have paid very little attention to the questions about what is good in life, and how our pursuits of knowledge should help enable us to make the human condition good, better, and inclusive of all persons. The Enlightenment *philosophes* took their ideas to be correct thence (ultimate) solutions to the socially problematic. But their ideas which dominate philosophical and scientific thought and practice to this day are not correct.

Nick's arguments run broad and deep: he analyses how our universities have been dominated by the quite successful attempts of the Enlightenment *philosophes* (Bacon-Newton-Enlightenment philosophy of knowledge) to detail and effectively confine knowledge as it was developed by the thinkers who led to that time. Then he argues that this dominating approach to knowledge is both very narrow and particular, and it

does not much take into account the effects of knowledge and its "products." It demands a particular notion of rationality, and a pervasive sense of unity in thought and practice.

And it was not only science as a central focus of knowledge, which carries this history to its work: the idea that scientific explorations would ultimately "benefit" us. From these ideas, there developed the parallel sense that the good world of science would lead to the social benefit of the social sciences. But all this remains little analyzed or criticized in the contexts of wisdom.

Here, this reviewer deeply agrees with the thesis of the book, and should point out that my reading of knowledge and wisdom seems to be very similar to Nick's. The notion that the Social Sciences would and should lead to a "good life," is widely assumed. But the reality has fallen far short of its assumptions and hopes, or led us on paths which are narrow.

I would point out, however, the works of [my] school of Anthropology led by Franz Boas whose students went out into the entire world – demonstrated that all human languages all are of the same order, that their cultures may differ for various histories and reasons, but that all humans are pretty much alike. This work led to the UNESCO statement on Race in 1946, and contributed much to the U.N. Human Rights Declaration of 1948. This work remains in the contexts of philosophical wisdom – certainly as Nick Maxwell embraces them. It surely helps inform my positive assessments of "From Knowledge to Wisdom," and reading this book has been a continuing lesson in framing my own work and thought.

Nick is very "encyclopaedic" in this book: he explores, then assesses and refutes each perspective – leading, of course, to the necessity for the perspective of wisdom in our thinking and work. Titles of the early chapters, pretty much in order, reveal and describe the outlines of his thinking, though his analysis is systematic and more than ample in its details.

The book sets the stage in Chapter One: "Human Suffering and the Need for a Comprehensive Intellectual Revolution." The enduring claim to the rationality of philosophical knowledge which would "enhance the quality of human life," is actually profoundly and damagingly *irrational, un-rigorous.* We need to think and act in new ways…beginning right now. Rational thought – rightly constructed - will lead to wisdom, not mere knowledge in the Enlightenment senses.

Nick's analysis goes deeply into the idea of knowledge: "sought as a means to the end of achieving that which is humanly desirable and of value…social progress, human welfare and enlightenment…the intellectual aim of acquiring objective knowledge of truth. Truth, not that which is humanly desirable must be the central intellectual concern of rational inquiry."

But truth – the very concept of truth – depends on much *a priori* knowledge, and…and we go back in time to questions of what and how we know; and what is the nature of truth. All this rises to question in these times, as Nick wonders about the concepts of

the *a priori* and how necessary it is to consider the world to be fixedly mechanistic, continuous. After much thought, he will want to rethink the very nature of the rational, and the very underpinnings of rationality.

The analysis proceeds systematically through the next four chapters, as Nick presents the critical (always!) exploration of the Philosophy of Knowledge, presents The Basic Objection to that, then the Philosophy of Wisdom, which is reframed into what he calls "Aim Oriented Rationality;" completing his critical expositions.

While I can't claim to judge his critical expositions deeply within the contexts of the Philosophy of Science, my considerable experiences with philosophers and historians of science (and technology) are quite congenial, at least parallel, with Nick's. Their focus is particular, narrow, and does not seem to leave much open for discussion.

In the end, the book lays out a critical exposition of a "new" sort, of "refined" ideas of rationality, and how we might go next in expanding our thinking about thinking.

Nick wonders if the kinds of change he explores – toward philosophical wisdom – might come more from the social sciences than from the Philosophers of Science. Here, I want to portray my own positions from which I have been reading/studying this book. As I deal with Boas' ideas of anthropology: culture, language, physical anthropology – in which we have to observe all the world's peoples – one is faced with more ancient and somewhat different senses of the history of ideas.

And my background flows also from the ideas of Pragmatists - especially Dewey and Mead – whose ideas of the human include the notion that we are in social interaction with others. The "self" emerges from a relationship with an infant's m/other (now included under the rubric of "Attachment Theory" in developmental psychology). The very concept of who and what we are, changes considerably, and will continue to embrace a philosophy of wisdom.

As Dewey and Mead attempted to "get beyond or around" dualism, we no longer deal with ideas from the past several centuries. Instead we are taken back to the Greeks whose ideas continue to dominate ours in many senses.

Here, I wonder – in considering -- Protagoras, that man is the measure, what is the nature of the "measurer." In examining the human body, beginning with one's/my own – I find that much has been neglected. The body, which is totally "obvious" in Dewey's lament, continues to be dominated by the Homunculus theory, recently encapsulated by the new ability to envision the "workings" of the brain.

So the battles between Heraclitus vs. Parmenides, Pythagoras, Plato, resituated somewhat in Aristotle's still dominating ideas, resonate loudly in rethinking the human: the one who (whose body) is capable of observing "objectively" No small task: how do we do that?

Faces – above all – the fact that we live and move "out-of-balance" complicates our bodily being, and asks how to wonder how we are, become, live both is and as change and permanence. Here we have taken the ideas of Descartes – flowing from Plato, especially – to captivate the dualisms of mind and body as being an "accurate" depiction of the human. To examine the world, it seems primary to examine the measurer – and to ask which is us…then which is the world.

Thus, my viewing of wisdom – possibly less the philosophy of wisdom – than expanding the practice of observing oneself observing, calls for us to devote increasing thought to the nature of the human. Where are we, how did we get here, how do we "move forward" in this global moment in inclusive manners?

Less, in my thinking, as an homage to our forebears; more to pursue the thinking which has led us here – toward being able to transcend our own thinking. We must walk with more than idolize the thinkers and prophets of all of time and places. Toward wisdom. The challenge: how to help create a good and meaningful life and attempt to include all persons now and toward the future?

These are some of lessons, confirmations, rethinkings which "From Knowledge to Wisdom" has inspired in my life and work.

Toward wisdom as we live and experience ourselves and the world. Thank you Nick Maxwell.

Editor's Endnote:

Socrates said that the lover of wisdom (the philosopher) desires and seeks wisdom but does not possess it. The lover of wisdom, in between a state of wisdom and ignorance, desires and seeks to live a good, harmonious, and beautiful life, the knowledge of which would be wisdom. Such a good, happy, and flourishing life was called *eudaemonia*. Hence, the intellectual starting point for philosophy – as a way of life – is that of admitting one's own ignorance about knowledge and wisdom, but is also premised upon the love of knowledge and wisdom. For Socrates, philosophy is an ongoing intellectual and social pursuit – call it 'wisdom-inquiry', if you will – that requires the capacity to love. In Plato's *Symposium*, Socrates claims to have learnt the art of love from Diotma, a wise woman from Martinea. She taught Socrates that love is the desire of beautiful and good things, but love is neither good nor beautiful in itself. Love is neither immortal nor mortal. Love is a Great Spirit that communicates – as a messenger – between the divine and mortals. It is the offspring of *Poros* (means, resources) and *Penia* (poverty); love is driven by need and finds the way to fulfil it. Love seeks the birth of life in (within; in the presence of) beauty – the connection between the immortal and mortal is sex and birth – and seeks to discover the fulfilment of that life (*eudaemonia*). Hence, by loving their children all mortal beings share in immortality and, from love, human beings seek wisdom and virtue. Love leads mortals to "the final and highest mystery" – the love of wisdom and virtue in beautiful souls – learning how to live a good and beautiful life.

Arguably, Nick Maxwell is a contemporary exponent of the Socratic tradition. His notion of 'wisdom-inquiry' is a return to the Socratic vision of philosophy – as an intellectual and social way of discovering the good and beautiful in life. The next two issues (at least) of the newsletter will be dedicated to responses from FOW members to Nick's invitation to engage in a lively debate into the nature of 'wisdom-inquiry', while allowing Nick a right to reply. Nick's ideas are generalities and basic arguments. It is timely that the FOW critically analyse and develop Nick's ideas further. Perhaps some members feel that his basic message is overly simplistic and needs improving. Or perhaps some members see connections and parallels with other contemporary schools of thought, say Critical Theory, Critical Realism, or Pragmatism. Or perhaps some members feel that there are spiritual or religious dimensions to 'wisdom-inquiry' that are being ignored. Please tell us what you think.

Please send submissions and all correspondence to

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