

GREED'S OK ACTUALLY

M J Platts

Manufacturing Engineering Group, Cambridge University,

The all-pervasive assertive self-centredness of utilitarianism cannot be removed by simply wishing it were not there. It has to be taken apart, and that can only begin with a clear understanding of the linguistic mechanisms that sustain it. The first person a conman cons is himself. He silences his conscience by silencing all sensitivity and all receptive and reflective behaviour, i.e. all mechanisms which internalise responsibility, and replaces them by assertive externalisation of all responsibility.

The principle behind a question is of the questioner acknowledging the other person as knowing more than themselves, so they give control of the subject to that person and themselves take on the responsibility of hearing and understanding what they say. But the mechanism displayed in the title - Michael Milken's catch phrase of the 1980s junk bond boom - is the reverse of this. Control of the subject is retained by an assertive statement which the other person not only has to actively counter even to be heard, but has to actively defeat from a weak position, against a powerful, experienced and wilful opponent determined not to hear, or even listen, and skilled in a million externalising, decoying, nit-picking diversion mechanisms. The unwritten dimensions of the assertion are:-

(confirm to me that) greed's OK

(understand that unless you confirm to me that) greed's OK (you can't play)

(confirm to me that the rule of the game is POWER - not truth, you idiot)

(and confirm to me that I have it and you don't)

i.e. the subject matter is not in fact the apparent subject of the openly visible assertion, the *real* assertion is about the rules of the game, and that the rules are about power, actually, - and the dice are already loaded, actually. And the hidden *mechanism* is *intimidation*. The result of this intimidation is not that the assertion is correct, but that criticism fails because of inadequate articulateness.

In business teaching, business schools, as separate entities, are only an American concept and barely exist outside of the Anglo-American world. Similarly the idea of accountancy as a role deserving any kind of authority only exists in this limited sphere, as does the notion of company management being solely for the benefit of the shareholders. In world terms these are not dominant attitudes and even within these countries, if time is taken into account (300 years of the industrial revolution in Britain's case) and the vast number of privately owned companies are also taken into account, many of which are world class

and work to a very deep, long term ethic, the 'business school' mentality is not dominant. It is only in business *literature* where assertiveness holds sway. 95% of written material on business - both in books and in newsprint - comes out of the Anglo-American business schools and their progeny.

The notion of business as being something for the benefit of the owner, and as workers being something you have to manage but have no wider responsibility towards, is an idea deeply rooted in America's history as a slave owning culture and it sees its modern extension in the practice of hostile take-over bids, and the abstract buying and selling of companies, the trading of thousands of people's lives as if they were abstract entities - practices which the rest of the world never dreams of doing.

Even in Anglo-American business's own terms, such analyses as have been done¹ show all this trading of companies to be at best worthless and in truth far less productive than caring, insightful custodianship. Perceptive study of British business history shows a very different pattern to be productive of the core values of society as well as of society's wealth. Britain's industrial revolution pre-dates America's by well over a century and the development of people through their work, work as both a liberating and a civilising process, was the triumph of the Protestant movement, which was largely artisan based². In Britain the Protestant work ethic has deep religious roots. Care must be taken not to confuse the deep profundity of the British Protestant work ethic with its much younger, much more utilitarian, physical and less profound American cousin. The British *earned* and *shared* their democratic freedom, whereas Americans took it by force - and didn't give it to others. Studies of the growth of other technically productive countries such as Japan show similar quiet but deeply religious custodianship over decades, developing the same virtues with the same outcomes as Britain^{3,4}. British industry lost depth of perspective this century, sliding into a simplistic, polarised, essentially Marxist socialist perspective of greedy capitalists and downtrodden workers, but it has regained lost positive ground from contact with Japanese practice and it is now possible to begin to articulate again in psychological terms and in historically relevant British cultural terms why, and in deeper spiritual terms how this is so⁵.

In contrast to this, business school teaching is embedded in the pervading secular ethos of American universities, which is utilitarian in the way defined by Max Weber and criticised by him on the fundamental grounds of taking the appearance of things not only as an acceptable substitute for but as actually equal to the real thing. That this is a common human failing does not make it acceptable. Most of Asia is frustrated by governments who *say* they are democratically elected, and yet who ruthlessly destroy critics and opposition, and control the press and the judiciary, as Singapore does⁶. As Lord Acton wrote to Bishop Mandell Craighton in 1887, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men... There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it." Not only do we have to recognise the difference between carrying something in the Spirit and covering something with the Letter, we *also* have to recognise *how* the Letter killeth while the Spirit giveth life, understanding that the Letter *always* gets usurped by power, because of its efficacy as cover. Every American Christian university has been secularised by people

who have *called themselves* Christian to validate what they are doing. The devil quoteth Scripture for his purposes.

ASSERTIVENESS

It is interesting to take Harvard as an example. Charles Eliot, who was President of Harvard, in *The Harvard Five-Foot Shelf* set of books, put Benjamin Franklin's book in the same volume as John Woolman and William Penn. The significance of this will be discussed later but briefly Franklin is not in the same league as Woolman and Penn. Max Weber quite simply takes Benjamin Franklin apart as someone who was insistent on persuading people that the appearance was enough. It speaks volumes that someone as supposedly wise as the President of Harvard not only can't tell the difference but goes even further and puts Franklin's book alongside Woolman's and Penn's and advocates it as if they are of equal depth. When the President of Harvard does that, you need look no further as to why American universities are not religious. This guy can't even tell the difference between a con-man and the real thing - and *he* is the President of Harvard! Why isn't Max Weber's text fundamental reading matter for every university student in America? Assertiveness is not the same as understanding!

The difference is important. It is a common tendency to not so much 'ask a question' as 'pose a problem', i.e. assert a feared (or desired) solution, until *someone else* stops you. This makes a power play out of everything, and Benjamin Franklin's assertion that the appearance is enough is a not very subtle bid for power by setting out to dictate the rules of the game in a self-serving way. Charles Eliot is not only accepting this as the rules of the game but confirming it - and by his own actions in the steering of the university, anyway, he had demonstrated it.

The fundamental flaw in the American character is assertiveness. Its primary characteristic is that all problems are tackled by issuing a challenge and fighting a duel, either literally or via legal representatives (hired gunslingers). Assertiveness was why many went to America in the first place. It is why there are no Indians left and America has a history of black slaves and still very substantial segregation. - And Jesus said *love thy neighbour!* Is it any surprise at all that when American universities were given the test of choosing between truth and power they have all chosen power? What did Satan say to Jesus up on the pinnacle?! In Hebrew the name Satan means *The Tester*. And yes, every American university has gone for fame and riches, asserting that it is the right thing to do! If you look squarely at its history, America has *never* been a religious country. America worships power. No genuinely religious people would ever have done what Americans have done. Both William Penn and John Woolman illustrate that difference. It is a *second* criticism of Charles Eliot that as a man he hides behind his 'academic' persona and juxtaposes these things as 'literature'. When the President of Harvard doesn't take a moral stance, what does he teach?

The decline of the presence of the Spirit in American universities is discussed from time to time in American academic papers. What is interesting about these papers is not the events they discuss - which are sad enough - but the errors in the papers themselves, and

in what they imply about a *continuing* lack of Christian scholarship in America. In a pair of papers^{7,8}, Burtchaell continuously re-iterates that the people who lead the universities into a secular path were themselves religious people:- but there are several errors contained in this one descriptive sentence.

Firstly, the only *working* description of a Christian is the one Jesus himself gave. When asked who his followers were, he said '*by their fruits ye will know them.*' And with this one answer he makes the distinction between all who might claim the *appearance* of Christians, from those who, whatever their name, carry the Light. His use of the story of the good Samaritan again pointedly makes the difference between those who bear the facade and those who really do proffer a drink from a different well. Many of the early American universities delegated custodianship of their religious credentials to an overseeing committee of Bishops or other church ministers. This is already confusing the label with the contents and externalising the responsibility. But what is apparent is that *neither* side in those early exchanges is actually genuinely religious, i.e. genuinely carrying the Presence, and that error of observation is carried in Burtchaell's use of the word 'secular'. Instead of using a word that describes what the universities were moving *to* it is far more use to use a description that makes clear what they were moving *from*. They were moving to a form which was nominally correct but in fact Spirit-less.

Phrased in that way, it is quite clear that if the people who gave that guidance had themselves been true inner carriers of the Light they would never have been able to mislead. (Burtchaell himself discusses at various points the strength of their egos). Anyone who is truly attached to the Light himself is so bent on following - on watching and listening and then on transmitting - that they themselves, as well as their colleagues, are never without the sense of awe that goes with *being lead*. But equally, if the church Bishops who were their supposed reference point had equally been genuinely inwardly attuned to the constant presence of the Light, that alone would have sustained the illumination and growth in wisdom of the scholars under their trust.

Any and every tradition can point to the crucial importance of this difference. Confucius said 'High office filled by men of narrow views, ritual performed without reverence, the forms of mourning observed without grief - these are things I cannot bear to see!' ⁹, and Mencius discusses the difference between Chinese emperors who had that humility and those who didn't¹⁰. And in Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery* he gives a riveting account of his master's vehement explosion at his own attempt, of which he was up to that point proud, to pull the bow by 'knack' or 'cleverness', rather than by 'given' strength, in the clear, instant, aware presence of the Spirit¹¹. Sufi writing is suffused with the same teaching¹².

The next error, however, which is not only symptomatic of the period discussed in the papers but is still symptomatic in the papers themselves is the introvertedness of it all.

There is a saying that there are many roads to the Holy Mountain and that while you can only follow one path, you can learn a lot about the nature of the climb from those higher up on *any* path. Taking the Catholic tradition as an example, repeating to each other what

Thomas Aquinas *said*, is not the same as *doing* what he *did*. He managed to make articulate a new level of clarity in Christian thinking *because he spent a lifetime studying Greek and Islamic teaching*. Not to do this is like insisting on not reading the writings of a wise man because he wrote in a foreign language. Confucius said 'the thought that I have heard of righteous men, but been unable to go to them it is these thoughts that disquiet me'. And the American Quaker John Woolman, the father of the anti-slavery movement, records in his journal (in 1763) going to visit the Indian Papunahung because 'haply I might learn something from him'.

To become stuck discussing for ever the *appearance* of the teaching, without ever reaching to discover the *reality* of it, and without struggling to become meticulously articulate about the difference, is to utterly fail not only *any* but *every* test of any kind of scholarship at all.

What you then have to understand is that spiritually insecure people will normally pose questions not by asking them in an open, obviously seeking way, but will assert a desired - or feared - answer and seek confirmation that those are the rules *really* aren't they, as in 'universities *have* to be secular to achieve high levels of scholarship, don't they' and 'universities *have* to be secular to get funding, don't they'. Neither of these are questions about what they purport to be about. They are questions about the rules of the game, and in neither case must the rules of the game be conceded. St. Francis, and St. Dominic, to take two historic examples, would have exploded at either suggestion. In particular, on the second question, every spiritual tradition has begun by rejecting money and power, and after a considerable time in the wilderness has been embarrassed by the respect acquired and the donations freely given. The whole of the development of western European civilisation over two thousand years has been based on this, in repeating waves. But all the 'nominal' Christian examples analysed in the papers chose Mammon when asked. In terms of teaching, a usefully descriptive phrase describes the elements of communication as 'the words, the music and the dance'. The words are what you say, the music is the way you say it etc., but the dance is what you do. The communicative proportions are 5%, 15%, 80%. Religion is the 80% core, not the 20% facade. To take but one example, when Luther was called to explain himself to the Diet at Wurms, he famously refused to argue. He directly spoke his faith.- 'Here I stand, I can do no other.'

The final error the papers make is to slur the distinction between belief and faith. It is not simply that this is shocking, it is not even a matter of scholarship. There is a precision in language that one neglects at one's peril and in a religious context to slur this particular distinction is suicidal. A belief is an assertion. I can say 'I believe it will be fine tomorrow' and I may or may not get rained on. The power in an assertion only comes from my will. People assert lots of beliefs. These are what we conventionally call their values. They are the assertions they have put in place to form their persona - to form the facade that they will present to the outside world. If they have no deeper spiritual experience their identity will be totally founded on these beliefs/assertions, whether they are right or not.

But faith is a *result*, not an assertion. It is a result born of genuine experience. It is true knowledge in action. To continue the analogy, while I may believe it will be fine tomorrow, I *know* it will be light, and I will get up and go about my business secure in that knowledge, whether it is fine or not. *That* is faith. Security in knowledge born of repeated experience. The path to acquiring that knowledge (and note that knowledge is not *information*, it is *the meaning behind that information*. It is the ability to *notice* that something is significant, and to then, further than that, be able to deduce *what* that significance *is*. It is that which informs action.) and the pathway markers which denote different stages of maturation of that awareness (and the associated ability to respond) are known as the virtues. And like all wet academics, universities now nearly universally teach *about* the virtues, purporting that they are things which were *beliefs* to some other people, a long time ago and a long way away - and they then play erudite word games with their own beliefs about what those people meant by what they said. Regaining articulate discussion of the Path of Virtue is a current necessity, as is its living demonstration^{13,14}.

A core tenet of Quaker teaching is a phrase by George Fox 'the Bible says this, the wise ones say that, but what canst *thou* say?' - pointing *directly* to getting experience. Equally, Buddha said, 'when I point at the moon, look at the moon, don't look at my finger.' Or, again, Rumi, who is acknowledged as the greatest poet in the middle east, comparable to Shakespeare, but was also a Sufi and said 'all the teaching in the world is as nothing compared to half an hour in the company of those who *know*' said 'when I offer you something, do not gaze at my face; take what is in my hand.'¹⁵ Pointers are only ever pointers and *until* it is rooted in your experience it is not *alive*. *Then* it speaks.

Not only to *do* less, but also to *accept* less, and furthermore, to even *seek* less, is not even to be on the road.

The examples of Christian behaviour in America are not the universities but are the companies like Ingersoll Milling Machine Co. An automatic attribute of these people is that they do not court attention. These are the real colleges of the Spirit, teaching directly. This is how the early monks taught and how those Protestants taught - by example. There is considerable value in articulating what these companies *do*. Confucius said 'I forget what I hear, I remember what I see, but I understand what I do.' The abiding sin of academia is that it teaches abstraction from reality, whereas all meditative traditions have taught engagement with it.

CONCERNING INNER WORK

A certain level of experience is necessary before one understands how prayer works, and therefore trusts oneself to it. Defiant assertiveness is adopted prior to that point. While the one requires a certain level of sensitivity and resilience before the perception is possible, the other seeks to unload the emotional tensions, looking for a proximate cause to either claim or blame as a convenient reason for the emotional release. While the same defiant assertiveness will call the second process pragmatic, it actually acts as a short circuit,

forestalling inner commitment and thus preventing deeper understanding being reached. It is a genuine golden calf. Pragmatism occludes true insight.

What is a mistake is to think that golden calves have no power. Mankind has spent much of its history worshipping golden calves of one kind or another and they carry considerable power. They certainly tap considerable psychological resources. Their attractiveness from a pragmatic point of view is that these psychological sources of emotional power are closer to hand, and thus more easily tapped, than the more fundamental but deeper source of power true inner work reaches. What inner work has to do is to infuse and inform those shallower sources of energy with deeper meaning. They are then properly usable, and used rightly.

This cannot be done by saying that pragmatism is shallow. The stories in the Bible repeatedly reach a crisis point in which there is a confrontation between a prophet figure, one way or another coming out of the desert, and one or a group of power figures, who insist that what they say is true and engineer a confrontation, in which the true power which the prophet figure carries makes itself visible. The connection is thus remade, by a mechanism which transcends and thus transforms the rules of the game. Daniel was trained alongside the court magicians. He did not deny them. He surpassed them. Metaphorically as well as literally, he survived the lions' den. Luther, summoned to explain himself to the Diet at Wurms did not argue. He simply said - and demonstrated - 'Here I stand. I can do no other.' George Fox's journal records many episodes with the same confrontational, transformational quality about them in the early Quaker period¹⁶. Always, something is held sacred, is tested, and made manifest, which is beyond the rules of pragmatism that have come to be accepted as *the* rules. And in due course transformation follows. The timing is never the choice of the servant and always from a position of worldly weakness. It is what is *needed*.

MAX WEBER'S CRITIQUE

In considering American (and indeed European) universities we can gain some enlightenment by examining this dilemma, and, for the American context, a particular pivot point is provided by Max Weber's critique of Benjamin Franklin as offering appearance as an adequate substitute for the real thing. Max Weber's critique focuses on exactly this issue, that Benjamin Franklin's pragmatic approach (Weber uses the word 'utilitarian') is fundamentally shallow and hypocritical but even more fundamentally than that, *not true*; deliberate (i.e. asserted) deception rather than reality¹⁷.

We will pick up in a moment why this is a useful pivot point for looking at American universities but we might first usefully observe that somebody being assertive is actually asking a question, but in a negative way. This helps us both see the self-locking mechanism in the thought process and see how to undo it.

Someone insufficiently secure at ego level to genuinely hold open a question and listen, will make an assertive statement of either a fear or a desire (projecting in either case an over simplistic version of what in real life is more complex) and demand confirmation of

it. And, furthermore, if it is not actually disproved, i.e. if they are not actually stopped, they will proceed to act on the basis of their assertion (presumption), it having been confirmed as true. We might observe that in the normal mode of asking a question the answer, i.e. the comfort-giving structure, comes at the *end* of the process and thus for the process to work we have to be willing (and able) to face and hold the tension of not knowing for the duration of the process. Assertively proposing an answer and seeking confirmation is the reverse of this, i.e. it tries to establish the comfort of having an answer at the *beginning* of the process.

Whilst this may merely seem perverse it in fact carries some insidious consequences with it. Firstly it may be noted that it engenders a sort of negative view of truth, along the lines of 'truth is what hasn't been proved to be false'. Secondly however it is also a self-permissive view of truth, and it externalises the responsibility to provide the proof of what is false. It is, thus, the absolute opposite of any suggestion of a responsibility to develop personal sensitivity and resilience in order to *discover* the truth. It is a pre-mature approach to truth that has to be gently but firmly caught and corrected otherwise it becomes a serious decoy, as it becomes confirmed as the *necessary* way to behave. It makes life a battleground, a power confrontation, in which my assertion is always true unless you can assert that it is false, louder than I can assert that it is true. So I make all sorts of pre-emptive moves to outmanoeuvre you, intimidate you, silence you. I deduce that *might is right* and sensitivity is for wimps and I must never apologise. To apologise, which is properly a reflective, emotionally absorptive and corrective act, a drawing back from face, is defeat to an assertive ego.

It is precisely because of the subtly self-reinforcing effect of this thought process ('power tends to corrupt, absolute power corrupts absolutely') that it *cannot* be negated *from* a position of power. It is functionally fundamental that the power of assertiveness is demonstrated to be false, by someone being still able to stand - by not buckling - in a position of utter powerlessness, while subject to absolutely everything power can throw at them. Truth only ever emerges beyond that point.

If we use this analysis of the maturation process - and these are everyday observations - we might ask why does Charles Eliot, who was after all President of Harvard, not make the critique of Benjamin Franklin that Max Weber makes. We will see that from this simple observation proceeds a great deal.

The reason Charles Eliot forms a pivotal example is that he chose to group together in a single volume in the set of books called *The Harvard Five - Foot Shelf*, two deeply reflective Quaker works, *The Journal of John Woolman*¹⁸ and William Penn's *Some Fruits of Solitude*¹⁹ with *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*,²⁰ apparently seeing them as of equal merit. What is of interest is that not only does Charles Eliot himself fail to make the critique of Benjamin Franklin that Max Weber makes, he also fails to notice that *both* John Woolman *and* William Penn would have passed exactly the same judgement on Benjamin Franklin as Max Weber did, and with similar direct clarity. William Penn, for instance, comes close to discussing utility, and is clearly discussing assertiveness, in his comments near the end of part II of his book when he says

"He that judges of other men by himself, does not always hit the mark because all men have not the same capacity, nor passions in interest.

If an able man refines upon the proceedings of an ordinary capacity, according to his own, he must ever miss it: but much more the ordinary man, when he shall pretend to speculate the motives to the able man's actions: for the able man deceives himself by making t'other wiser than he is in the reason of his conduct; and the ordinary man makes himself so, in presuming to judge of the reasons of the abler man's actions.

'Tis in short a wood, a maze; and of nothing are we more uncertain, nor in any thing do we oftener befool ourselves.

The mischiefs are many that follow this humour, and dangerous: for men misguide themselves, act upon false measures, and meet frequently with mischievous disappointments.

It excludes all confidence in commerce; allows of no such thing as a principle in practice; supposes every man to act upon other reasons than what appears, and that there is no such thing as a straightness or sincerity among mankind: a trick instead of truth.

Neither, allowing nature or religion; but some worldly fetch or advantage: the true, the hidden motive to all men to act or do.

'Tis hard to express its uncharitableness, as well as uncertainty; and has more of vanity than benefit in it.

This foolish quality gives a large field, but let what I have said serve for this time."

The section which follows, *Of Charity*, which closes the book, should be imprinted on every study wall in every university in America. This American, to whom the land named Pennsylvania was given and who separately paid the Indians again for it, accepted without rancour the unreasoned and unjust imposition of lifelong house arrest on him, by a distrustful English authority and this book, and indeed George Fox's *Journal*, which he edited, we owe to the years of reflective time he thus spent back in England. Both contain a myriad lessons for Americans who, a century later in similar unreasonable circumstances defiantly did the opposite - and enslaved the blacks and exterminated the Indians. Here is William Penn, in 1702, articulating three levels of charity:- material, social and Spiritual.

"Charity has various senses, but is excellent in all of them.

It imports; first, the commiseration of the poor, and unhappy of mankind, and extends an helping-hand to mend their condition.

They that feel nothing of this, are at best not above half of kin to human race; since they must have no bowels, which makes such an essential part thereof, who have no more nature.

A man, and yet not have the feeling of the wants or needs of his own flesh and blood! A monster rather! And may he never be suffer'd to propagate such an unnatural stock in the world.

Such an uncharitableness spoils the best gains, and two to one but it entails a curse upon the possessors.

Nor can we expect to be heard of God in our prayers, that turn a deaf ear to the petitions of the distressed amongst our fellow creatures.

God sends the poor to try us, as well as he tries them by being such: and he that refuses them a little out of the great deal that God has given him, lays up poverty in store for his own posterity.

I will not say these works are meritorious, but dare say they are acceptable, and go not without their reward: tho' to humble us in our fulness and liberality too, we only give but what is given us to give as well as use; for if we are not our own, less is that so which God has intrusted us with.

Next, charity makes the best construction of things and persons and is so far from being an evil spy, a back-biter, or a detractor, that it excuses weakness, extenuates miscarriages, makes the best of every thing; forgives every body, serves all, and hopes to the end.

It moderates extreams, is always for expediences, labours to accommodate differences, and had rather suffer than revenge: and so far from exacting the utmost farthing, that it had rather lose than seek its own violently.

And it acts freely, so, zealously too; but 'tis always to do good, for it hurts no body.

An universal remedy against discord, and an Holy cement for mankind.

And lastly, 'tis love to God and the brethren, which raises the Soul above all worldly considerations; and, as it gives a taste of Heaven upon earth, so 'tis Heaven in the fulness of it hereafter to the truly charitable here.

This is the noblest sense charity has, after which all should press, as that more excellent Way.

Nay, most excellent; for as faith, hope and charity were the more excellent Way that great Apostle discovered to the Christians, (too apt to stick in outward gifts

and church performances) so of that better Way he preferred charity as the best part, because it would out-last the rest, and abide for ever.

Wherefore a man can never be a true and good Christian without charity, even in the lowest sense of it: and yet he may have that part thereof, and still be none of the Apostle's true Christian, since he tells us, that tho' we should give all our goods to the poor, and want charity (in her other and higher senses) it would profit us nothing.

Nay, tho' we had all tongues, all knowledge, and even gifts of prophesy, and were preachers to others; ay, and had zeal enough to give our bodies to be burned, yet if we wanted charity, it would not avail us for salvation.

It seems it was his (and indeed ought to be our) Unum Necessarium, or the One Thing Needful, which our Saviour attributed to Mary, in preference to her sister Martha, that seems not to have wanted the lesser parts of charity.

Would God this Divine Virtue were more implanted and diffused among mankind, the pretenders to Christianity especially, and we should certainly mind piety more than controversy, and exercise love and compassion instead of censuring and persecuting one another in any manner whatsoever."

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

Let us look at this reflective road. What we will see is that Charles Eliot's approach represents an inability to be reflective enough to *see*. It represents a *lack* of a competence for which no quantity of cleverness substitutes. We have differentiated between positive truth, which has to be found but is then its own advocate, and negative truth, which is ego based, confusing willpower with truth. This same positive/negative differentiation holds in all related areas. What we need to look at are the mechanisms for *developing* that competence, and clearly Charles Eliot is going to be no help to us. So is Harvard Business School going to help us?

The central perception of the Quaker method of working - of the Quaker method of engaging in life - is to eliminate all positions and processes which expose the ego to the subtle enticements of power. In Quaker meetings for worship not only is there no minister, there is no set service, no hymns, no readings and not even a set timescale. Friends gather, in receptive silence, working to still themselves physically and mentally, so that they can wait, and can notice inner guidance.

It is not only our experience that *this can be done* - i.e. that the self-stilling competence can be acquired - but that *guidance is given*. And it is the repeated experience of these two matching halves of a process making a whole, that develops not only the initial competence to listen but the competence to hear, and to discern what is meant, and to notice not only what is intended, but to notice the supportive competences that have been put in place (and to recognise them *as they are put* in place) and to recognise the intended

coherent whole and so to trust the guidance and act on it, and to make the compounding moves that one is clearly being instructed to make.

Embedded in this process is the steady development of awareness not only of the stumblings of the ego but of its matching strengths and competences, and the two hand in hand form a fruitful learning process which develops a functional competence in the world which is nevertheless driven from far beyond the world. If only for occasional moments one is 'in the world but not of it' - one knows Grace. The developing inner attention increasingly notices different things, and it is not that it 'chooses' different things, as if choosing between alternatives of equivalent value, it does not 'choose' at all. It perceives a more profound set of rules, which it is then natural and obvious to work to. In this sense competence is genuinely a development of awareness, and competent action is that awareness in action. It is a more profound understanding - a more profound *functional* understanding of how things actually *work*.

The positive/negative differentiation thus clarifies into positive versions of things which are automatically functional, and negative versions which are not so, and require constant outward effort to assert the supposed positive benefit - which is in fact energy expended to keep its negative counterpart at bay, seeing the two as having to be separate, instead of seeing that the two different aspects integrated together yield a more evolved whole.

Real freedom is the internalised civility in a community so that no-one ever needs to defend themselves, because no-one would ever dream of attacking them. They are not only 'defended' but positively grown, by a profound communal goodwill.

Positive wealth is to have enough without question - to not need more. Diogenes, already a light traveller through life, suddenly saw what was being shown him when he saw a young boy drinking from a stream with cupped hands, and took his mug out of his pack and dashed it on the ground saying 'why have I been carrying this around all my life?!' Locke's ego-based struggle to identify ownership with proximate causes fits well with the pragmatic notion that 'possession is nine tenths of the law', a dictum which reveals its own assertiveness. It is not surprising that this is an attractive dictum to a people who 300 years ago entered as aliens a land populated for 30,000 years and made it theirs by genocide. What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his Soul?....?.....?....?

Positive wisdom is something far beyond cleverness. Rumi, the great Islamic poet and teacher, said, "all the learning in the world is as nothing compared to half an hour in the presence of those who *know*."

Does a Christian need to be rich?

Does a Christian need the accolades of power, when he knows the way to the wellsprings of life?

Is he afraid to go down that road?

Let Papunahung, the Indian who John Woolman went to see 'if haply I might learn something from him' have the last word. After his father's death he

"" went to the woods in great bitterness of spirit." Here, in his own account, "being impressed with a belief that there was a great power, who had created all things, his mind had turned from this lower world to look towards him who had created it."

Papunahung had become conscious of God and of evil. He "found his own heart was bad and hard....In this situation he cried unto that powerful being....and after a long time of sorrow and perseverance in seeking help, God was pleased to reveal himself to his mind and to put goodness in his heart." After that he found so much love for all men "that he thought he could bear with their revilings and abuses without resentment, appearing sensible that, as the hearts of men were bad and hard, till God made them good, the ill usage he received from them proceeded from the same evil seed under which he himself had so long groaned.""

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