

THEOSOPHY-SCIENCE GROUP

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 73

December 2013

EDITORIAL NOTES

This Newsletter is prepared by the Theosophy-Science Group in Australia for interested members of the Theosophical Society in Australia. The email version is also made available on request to members of the Theosophical Society in New Zealand and USA by the respective National bodies. Members in USA should contact tsa@theosophical.org, Members in New Zealand should contact: john@serion.co.nz. Recipients are welcome to share the Newsletter with friends but it must not be reproduced in any medium including on a website. However, permission is given for quoting of extracts or individual articles with due acknowledgment. Selected items appear from time to time on the website of the TS in Australia – austheos.org.au.

As the editor of this Newsletter and Convener of the Australian Theosophy-Science Group I hope to continue providing readers with news of our activities, past and future, as well as articles of general scientific and theosophical interest. I would welcome contributions from our readers. I take this opportunity to wish all readers a happy Christmas and a healthy, creative, and peaceful New Year.

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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING OUR NEXT SPRINGBROOK SYMPOSIUM 2014

Arrive Springbrook Monday 29 September
Meeting after dinner Monday 29/9; Tuesday 30; Wednesday 1 Oct;
Thursday 2 Oct morning
Depart Thursday 2 Oct after lunch.

It is intended to feature several invited keynote speakers dealing with a wide range of stimulating topics from quantum physics, cosmology, and planetary sciences, to neuroscience, psychology, health, and sociology. Depending on the number of participants, the number of speakers may be restricted, but time will be available for discussions.

[Intending participants please contact the Co-ordinator, Victor Gostin]

THEOSOPHY-SCIENCE DISCUSSION GROUP (Perth)

Information supplied by Hana O'Rourke [hanav@au1.ibm.com] 27-8-2013.

Our group has been meeting monthly (Every 1st Saturday each month), and it seems to have varied attendance, even though going strong. We have anything from 5 to 12 attendees, depending on the particular topic of the month. The setup that we aim to have in place is approximately 30 minutes main topic presentation, followed by a group discussion to give everyone a chance to contribute.

The first quarter of 2013 was taken up by "The Real Evolution Debate", as there were a number of interesting views.

The following items were also covered since then:

May: Genographic Project: Our Genetic Journey

June: Emerging Technologies

July: Occult Chemistry / Modern Science

August: Nanotechnology

September: Energy -- In the words of Richard Feynman, "It is important to realise that in physics today, we have no knowledge what energy is. We do not have a picture that energy comes in blobs of a definite amount" R.Feynman

October: The Akashik Experience. A look at science and the Cosmic Memory Field.

INTERNATIONAL THEOSOPHICAL NEWS:

European Congress 2014

"Bridging Science and Spirituality"

30 July to 4 August, 2014

Adyar Auditorium

4 Square Rapp, Paris 7th Arrondissement.

[By the way, a city 'Square' is called 'place' in French, but this is indeed called 'square' and is actually a very short dead-end street off Avenue Rapp, lined with imposing buildings including the TS one. The closest Métro is *Pont de L'Alma* at the river end of Ave Rapp, an easy walk.]

Further details from Geoff Harrod [geoffrey.harrod@gmail.com]

OPEN FORUM

THE IMPORTANCE OF DOUBT FOR A SCIENTIST

"Recently the positive aspects of doubt were explored by thinkers from a variety of disciplines in the BBC Radio 3 series *The Essay*. Susan Greenfield discussed its role in science, starting with Michael Faraday's observation that "there's nothing quite as frightening as someone who knows they are right" and concluding that doubt is integral to science – "as natural as breathing." This is because science is not just about measuring things. It also involves the evaluation of results and extraction of meaning, which is subject to controversy, so its claims are always provisional and likely to change as fresh data accrue. Doubt is a great asset for a free-thinker because it encourages the development of new views, sometimes even leading to paradigm shifts. But a balance is required – too little doubt leads to sloppiness, while too much precludes novelty and delays progress. She made an important distinction between science and scientism. The latter involves aggressive intolerance and derision of competing opinions but this has no place in proper scientific dialogue. Doubt is different from denial and suspension of belief is different from refusal to believe. "

As reported by Prof. Bernard Carr (Chairman of SMN) and sent by Edi Bilimoria, UK May1, 2013.

NEW BOOK

The Varieties of Magical Experience: Indigenous, Medieval, and Modern Magic by Lynne Hume and Nevill Drury is published by Bloomsbury (Berg), U.K. in 2013.
Dr Lynne Hume [l.hume@uq.edu.au]

"Magic can be defined as a form of consciousness that shifts perceptions of reality—something that can occur in a range of contexts: visionary indigenous worlds, trance and mediumistic states, ritual spaces, in nature, and even across the Internet. A magical experience can happen to anyone, in any culture, at any time." These words are cited in the abstract to a new book called *The Varieties of Magical Experience: Indigenous, Medieval, and Modern Magic* that examines magic in all its aspects. It is co-authored by Lynne Hume & Nevill Drury (Queensland Univ.).

Commenting on the book, Dr Marguerite Johnson (Univ. Newcastle, Australia) writes: "The primeval human need to believe in things intangible is brought to life in an engaging and respectful series of surveys of the varieties of magic or, more specifically, magical experiences chronicled by Drury and Hume. From the multifarious notions and experiences of other worlds, to the sub-field of sensory anthropology through to cybermagic, this book offers a useful introduction to the concepts and realities of magic traversing cultures and historical eras.

"Through detailed case studies, verbatim accounts of personal experiences, and first-hand experience from the authors' own active participation in many alternative religious rituals and ceremonies, this unique book reveals how magic can be a universal phenomenon that crosses cultural, historical, and spatial boundaries."

"The work is organized in five sections that embrace several broad themes: indigenous magical and shamanic practices; medieval witchcraft; sorcery and hermetic magic; and contemporary Western magical practices, including the role of sexuality, trance, and meditation. The introductory section explores the idea of magic, other realities, and the employment of all the senses, while the final section discusses contemporary issues of ecology and cybermagic. The authors give voice to the powerful emotions and feelings that result from a magical encounter, providing engaging and accessible information to general readers, while those well versed in the opaque world of magic and occultism, consciousness studies, and imaginal and disembodied realms will appreciate the book's content at a deeper level."

Lynne Hume has a long history of research in contemporary spirituality and consciousness. She has a doctoral degree in anthropology and has lectured in courses on anthropology of religion for over 20 years, specialising in cross-cultural research and new religious movements. Her publications include numerous articles in academic journals and encyclopedias: *Portals: Opening Doorways to Other Realities Through the Senses* (2007); *Ancestral Power: The Dreaming, Consciousness and Aboriginal Australians* (2002); *Witchcraft and Paganism in Australia* (1997); *Popular Spiritualities: The Politics of Contemporary Enchantment* (2006), co-edited with Kathleen McPhillips; and *Anthropologists in the Field: Cases in Participant Observation* (2004), co-edited with Jane Mulcock.

NOT A BIG BANG but a BIG BOUNCE

Once again cosmologists have revived the theory of a **recycled Universe** - New Scientist 26 Oct. 2013.

Despite its popularity, the current theory requires rapid inflation to ensure cosmic evenness and this inflation cannot be explained. A cyclic universe with slow contraction would lead to high pressures during the crunch that would iron out most wrinkles. However, the new universe would carry tiny quantum fluctuations that would provide the seeds of new large-scale structure, as Paul Steinhardt of Princeton University explains [Physical Review D, doi.org/pcd]

READERS' COMMENTS

Speculations on Rupert Sheldrake's ideas of morphic resonance

Roger Koch (Adelaide) writes:

A key idea for Sheldrake is the existence of information fields that act as a kind of universal memory. Once a form or activity has come into being it provides the blueprint for other similar effects, which may then multiply with ease. The classic example is the formation of crystals, for which Sheldrake has elsewhere provided evidence, but in principle he thinks it can apply to anything, from the development of organisms to the acquisition of new skills.

This has implications for cosmology, he believes. Far from being set in stone since the Big Bang, nature's laws should be considered as evolving habits that grow stronger through repetition; the universe is an ongoing creative process, of which human creativity is part.

On the subject of consciousness Sheldrake points out that even materialists can't decide what causes it, which is why there are so many rival theories. He quotes Galen Strawson, himself a materialist, who is scathing about the way fellow philosophers are willing to deny the reality of their own experience - testament to the power of the materialist faith. He approves Strawson's interest in panpsychism, the doctrine that all matter is invested with mental as well as physical aspects.

[Reflecting on the human genome, following discussions with a medical diagnostician for over 20 years with IMVS, Koch reflects:]

We have only recently mapped the human genome, of which 98% is classified as "junk", which might also mean that we just don't understand its actual function as yet; or maybe it is "reserved" for future use; or maybe it has even gone dormant from some past application. Now the remaining 2% of the genome that we do understand only carries instructions to manufacture various proteins that the bodily organs need to function. Nowhere do we discern any blueprint which instruct the body on how to assemble itself. For example, how does a fetus know where to place & how to construct all of our myriad organs? Is it possible that morphic resonance contains this required blueprint of information, on an energetic level that we cannot detect with our senses or as yet with our scientific instruments? Could a related phenomenon be spirits that indigenous peoples have talked of, which seem to grow stronger with recognition? It has been reported that certain water spirits have diminished in strength as the older traditions of recognizing these spirits has abated in modern times. Hypothetically, if energetic information regarding physical body blueprints is also subject to the same rules, would it follow that the ability to reconstruct long extinct animals from recovered DNA (the theme of the Jurassic Park movies) would also become compromised, as the required morphic resonance fields diminish in strength, owing to non-use over a long time? Interesting to speculate about this...

[Readers comments are invited - Ed]

INTRODUCING Jacques Mahnich & Project THEOSCIENCE to the Australian Theosophy-Science community

Born 1951, in Châlon-sur-Saône, France

Married to Anne-Marie (1950), 4 children and 4 grand-children

Autodidact since end of secondary school.

Spent 5 years in the army (1970-75) to learn electronics (Ecole Supérieure de l'Electronique de l'Armée de Terre). Then joined the Aeronautical Industry (1975).

Nine years of experience in the Flight-Test center as Engine Control System specialist – the very first electronic controls flying on military aircraft engines - Six

years spent in the USA on an international cooperation [Joint Venture]. Active participation in international leadership aeronautical committees.

Retired since 2011; living in Normandie.

Since early in my life, I have been, and I am still a dedicated searcher into the nature of reality. I have been learning on my own in two areas of Physics : Cosmology and Quantum Physics. Together with the intellectual approach, I have also immersed myself in the Esoteric Traditions of the world. This is where Theosophy came on board.

About Theosophy

I joined the Theosophical Society in Marseille (France) in 1979, together with Anne-Marie and we have been members since, participating in the activities all along these years (summer schools, lodges, conferences, ...). Since my retirement, I am more involved in the activities of the French Section in Paris. I am leading the Saint-Jean Lodge, providing theosophical training and conferences. Outside the French Section, I am also involved in a research project called « The Quest for the Book of Dzyan », together with scholars from abroad (<http://prajnaquest.fr/blog>). Finally, I am also an active member of the Theosophical Order of Service in France.

About the Project THEOSCIENCE

Building a bridge between Traditions , including Theosophy and Science has always been part of the activities of theosophists all around the world. The very first theosophical book - *Isis Unveiled*, was already a call for this approach. Since this time, myriads of books have been published on the subject, and many groups have been and are still active throughout the theosophical world. On the other hand, also since this time, Science has been progressing tremendously. Since the 1970s, renowned scientific minds have opened up the scope of scientific research outside the usual boundaries of physical observations. The current vision in Cosmological and Particles Physics has evolved to include many more Nature's models from which parallels with the Wisdom Religion teachings can be assessed. Finally, the Internet technologies are enabling information access to a larger public, and the researchers' mindset seems to open up to larger Reality models. Looking back in Theosophical activities on this subject, one can find many valuable journals with limited scope of dissemination :

- Bulletin of the Theosophy-Science Research Association (India), then Theoscientist (1977)
- Science Group Journal (UK, 1927-1971)
- Theosophy-Science (UK, 1977-1983)
- Theosophy-Science Group Newsletter (Australia, 1984)
- Holistic Science and Human Values (India, 1992)
- Research Center Journal (UK, 1972-1976)
- Theosophical Research Center Transactions (UK, 1931-1968)
- Theosophical Research Journal (USA, 1984-1988), and probably many more.

These groups have been exploring, and are still exploring the parallels and bridges which can be established between Traditions and Science. It is a key activity for the transmission of theosophical teachings to the world.

***** The Project THEOSCIENCE ***** is a proposal to energize synergies and to encourage knowledge sharing between the communities of seekers.

The proposed road-map for the development of this initiative can be summarized in the following major steps :

1. Build a leadership/steering committee, a network of leaders of the theosophical-science groups in the world. This board will establish the objectives/policies and procedures required.
2. Launch the communication/sharing tool - THEOSCIENCE.ORG web site - where newsletters, research publications, and any relevant information can be posted.
3. Organize common subjects for research in order to synergize existing resources and skills.
4. Further developments, like international THEOSCIENCE conferences can be organized.

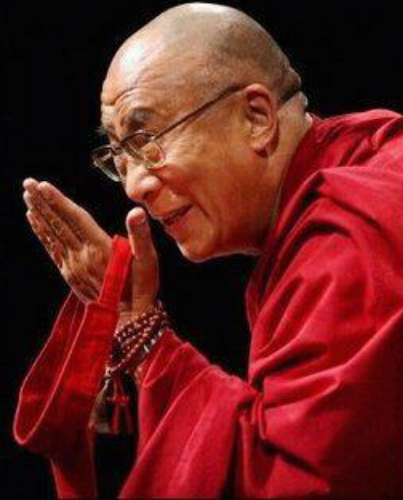
This initiative is an individual initiative to start with. Should the project gain acceptance in the community, further affiliation may be needed for the sake of its support and development.

I, personally, will be fully dedicated to its success with all my energy and experience.

Jacques Mahnich

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The Dalai Lama, when asked what surprised him most about humanity, answered "Man. Because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never really lived."



BOOKS OF INTEREST

MARKETS, MORALS and the science of ECONOMICS

A synopsis by Olga Gostin of *What money can't buy: the moral limits of markets* by Michael Sandel 2012.

In two earlier articles I have touched on the climate change debate as seen through the eyes of certain authors and organisations. In this contribution, I should like to share a seminal work addressing certain aspects of our market-driven thinking which resonates because, whatever the causes of climate change, there is no gainsaying that there are glaring inequalities in the distribution of wealth both within and between nations, and that these will only be exacerbated by changes and vagaries of climate change. In his 2012 text *What money can't buy: the moral limits of markets*, published by Penguin Books, Michael Sandel argues that market values have displaced moral and other societal norms in many aspects of life: from institutions like education, law and government, to arts, education, sports and even family and personal relations. Almost unawares, Sandel argues, we have moved from a market economy to a marketing society.

According to Sandel, the era of market triumphalism that reached its nadir in the financial crisis of 2008, began in the early 1980s when Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher promoted markets rather than government as the key to prosperity, freedom

and achieving the public good. Rather sanguinely, I think, the author declares that this era has now come to an end (p.6). Drawing largely on American examples, the author argues that markets that had become detached from morals now have to find means of reconnecting with them. "We need to think through the moral limits of markets" (p.7). Specifically, Sandel asks whether there are things that money should *not* buy, citing as examples for-profit schools, hospitals and prisons; the outsourcing of war to private military contractors; the eclipse of public police forces by private security firms; buying and selling the right to pollute; the role of donations in political campaigns, and so on.

Why should this pervasiveness of marketing be a moral issue at all? Sandel raises two concerns that underlie his discussion throughout the book: inequality and corruption. Simply put, the more money can buy, the more affluence matters. Thus those with financial means have access to better schooling and health care as well as safer neighborhoods. "The commodification of everything has sharpened the sting of inequality by making money matter more"(p.9).

Sandel's second caveat is simple: "Putting a price on the good things in life can corrupt them"(p.9). As examples he cites paying kids to read books. This might well make them read more but potentially teaches them "to regard reading as a chore rather than a source of intrinsic satisfaction" (p.9). Thus also, "hiring foreign mercenaries to fight our wars might spare the lives of our citizens but corrupts the meaning of citizenship" (p.9). Certain 'goods' argues Sandel, are simply not to be treated as commodities: people, especially children (consider slavery, sweat-shops, sex-trade); votes, and civic obligations like jury duty, military service. To treat any of these as commodities degrades and corrupts both the user and the abused because moral and political questions are implied, not merely economic outcomes. According to Sandel, these considerations were not debated during the era of market triumphalism (I have reservations about that) and as a result "without quite realising it, without ever deciding to do so, we drifted from *having* a market economy to *being* a market society"(p.10). The difference between the two is that whereas a market economy is a tool for organising productive activity, a market society is a way of life in which "market values seep into every aspect of human endeavor. It's a place where social relations are made over in the image of the market"(p.11). The crucial question confronting modern societies is: which of the two models do we want as the guiding principle of our lives?

Sandel identifies two 'daunting obstacles' to tackling this (moral) dilemma and the attempt to rethink the role and reach of markets in modern life. These are the power and prestige of market thinking on one hand, and the rancor and emptiness of public discourse on the other. Thus in the USA which precipitated the global financial crisis, the unexpected outcome was the rise of the Tea Party "whose hostility to government and embrace of free markets would have made Ronald Reagan blush" (p.12). Part of the appeal of markets is that they don't pass judgment on the preferences they satisfy. If someone is prepared to sell sex or a kidney, there is no moral recrimination attached to the transaction. "This non-judgmental stance towards values lies at the

heart of market reasoning and explains much of its appeal"(p.14). As for public discourse, Sandel's second daunting obstacle, its parlous state pre-empts any systematic and open discourse about moral questions. "Our politics is overheated because it is mostly vacant, empty of moral and spiritual content. It fails to engage with big questions that people care about"(p.13). As a result public discourse "has been drained of moral and civic energy, and has contributed to the technocratic, managerial politics that afflicts many societies today"(p.14). Though Sandel's reflections address the US polity, I think that Australia's recent experience at the 2013 elections confirms the veracity of his observations. Sandel appeals for a reasoned debate about the moral limits of markets and a discussion about "where markets serve the public good, and where they don't belong" (p.14). He does not anticipate any absolute agreement on these contested issues but engagement in moral discussion would make for a 'healthier public life'.

This, in essence is the core of Sandel's argument. The reader frustrated by the absence of hard science in this article may now safely switch off. For stayers, however, I should like to flesh out Sandel's examples and reflections as they invite us to think about what makes *our* society tick, to reflect on what might be prevented in Australia, or be done better. In a chapter entitled Jumping the Queue, the author reflects on how far American society has gone away from "the theme park queue that was the great equalizer... where every vacationing family waited its turn in democratic fashion" (p.18). Today queue jumping can be bought by paying special (extra) entry fees to amusement parks, purchasing special access to less congested fast lanes on highways, or paying extra charges for premium delivery of goods or jumping the queue in dry cleaning or laundry services. Even where money cannot accelerate access to a service or desired goods, it is possible to enlist the poor or needy to do the standing in queue on one's behalf. Indeed, line-standing companies have emerged in America with the sole purpose of relieving the affluent from the tedium of standing in queue for highly desired sporting or cultural events. These companies recruit retirees, unemployed persons and increasingly, homeless people "to brave the elements and hold a place in the queue" (p.22). While some commentators have denounced the practice of line-standing as demeaning, others have argued that "ultimately it's an honest job in a free-market economy" (p.23). In Australia, the phenomenon of scalpers for highly desirable venues is also well known, albeit frowned upon. In China, Sandel refers to ticket scalping for doctors' appointments at top hospitals in Beijing where the scalpers "make a business of the yawning gap between supply and demand" (p.24). In all these instances the ethic of the queue: 'first come first served' is being displaced by the ethic of the market: 'you get what you pay for'. This shift, declares Sandel, "reflects something bigger - the growing reach of money and markets into spheres of life once governed by nonmarket norms" (p.28). The interested reader may further explore the merits of marketable line-standing and scalping versus queues in Sandel's other examples: scalping campsites at Yosemite National Park, Papal masses for sale and the market for Bruce Springsteen concerts.

In his next chapter, Sandel tackles the issue of incentives, such as cash-for-sterilization and its opposite: surrogacy or child-bearing for another person. In both instances one could argue that the women concerned are free agents to do with their bodies as they think fit, and that personal advantage (read market forces) will inform their decision. After all, if a woman has the right to forego childbearing for personal reasons, why should she be castigated for doing it for a fee? But Sandel argues that all is not as straightforward as might seem. Might a poor woman, one destitute, or drug addicted, not be coerced by the necessity of her situation? Sandel argues that cash-for sterilization is a form of bribery and that it is corrupt, irrespective of whether coercion has been applied or not. Both the buyer and the seller (the woman) devalue the good being sold, i.e. the woman's reproductive capacity (p.46). Sandel raises the question: "Should we regard our bodies as possessions that we own and can use and dispose of as we please, or do some uses of our bodies amount to self-degradation?" (p.47). Wisely he doesn't articulate a definite answer, nor does he mention, much less address the obvious derivative from the question noted above: what are the implications of his moral stand on abortion? It is the hallmark of this book that it raises issues, eschews others and forces us to reflect on our personal moral standpoint(s). For Sandel his recurring reflection on the past few decades is the remarkable degree to which social relations are being remade in the image of market relations.

One aspect of this transformation is the growing use of monetary incentives to solve social problems. As examples he discusses cash incentives paid to under-achieving kids for reading, for obtaining good grades and teachers' pay-for-performance. These measures have had mixed results but in Texas they helped to positively "transform the culture of schools and the attitudes of students towards academic achievement" (p.54). A similar cash incentive has been increasingly applied to achieve desired health outcomes: quit smoking, take medication, show up for routine checks, vaccinate, lose weight. Increasingly large corporations that provide health insurance find it beneficial to keep their staff in good health, and cash incentives are one approach to this. In England, however, there has been sharp criticism of the National Health Service's Pounds for Pounds program that pays up to \$612 to obese people who lose weight and keep it off for two years. "Paying someone to ditch bad habits is the ultimate in nanny state mentality, absolving them of any responsibility for their health" (p.58). Some have argued further that financial rewards discriminate unfairly against those whose medical conditions are beyond their control. "Health bribes trick us into doing something we should be doing anyhow. They induce us to do the right thing for the wrong reason...We should rise above manipulation, otherwise the bribe may become habit forming "(p.59). At a fundamental level the goal (of sustained good health) may include values and attitudes that cash incentives undermine. Sandel also challenges 'perverse incentives' that corrupt immigration policy through the fast tracking of applicants able to pay up to \$50 000. In the United States the cash-for-green-card plan is one such facilitator of queue jumping, while 'business visas' offer the same rewards in Australia as a means of speedy entry and by implication, a fast track to citizenship. Such measures promote certain ways of looking at people - whether business people, would-be migrants or refugees, - as

goods to be exchanged rather than say, human beings in need. Values are corroded in the process.

As an example of subtle changes in values, Sandel cites a study of Israeli child care centres, all of which faced the same problem: that parents sometimes were late to pick up their children thereby inconveniencing staff who had to stay back to look after the children. To address this problem some centres imposed a fine on latecomers, with a counter-intuitive outcome: late pickups actually increased. Why so? Imposing a fine subtly changed the norms underlying childcare. Whereas prior to the introduction of the fines late parents felt guilty about inconveniencing the childcare staff, they treated the introduced fine as a fee for service that they were willing to pay. The shift is subtle but important: whereas fines register moral disapproval, fees are prices that involve no moral judgment. A similar shift is noted in China where the wealthy accept the fine for violating the one-child policy, regarding it as a fee for the convenience of having more than one child. Clearly, "there is something troubling about a system in which people buy and sell the right to have kids. Part of what's troubling is the unfairness of such a system under conditions of [economic] inequality" (p.71). Although Chinese family planning authorities have sought to assert punitive sanctions by shaming the 'miscreants' publicly, Sandel argues that the whole context intrinsically devalues procreation, children and parenthood.

The same argument is broadly applied to tradable pollution permits albeit in a global setting rather than a domestic one. Here wealthy nations essentially outsource their obligation to curb atmospheric pollution rather than curtailing their own energy-profligate way of life. This approach does damage to two norms: "it entrenches an instrumental attitude towards nature, and it undermines the spirit of shared sacrifice that may be necessary to create a global environmental ethic" (p.75). Sandel argues that this matters profoundly, both morally and politically. Much the same argument applies to carbon offsets even though they acknowledge the destructive impact of carbon footprints and put a price on them, as in extra levies on air flights. Here again, however, those who buy carbon offsets may consider themselves thereby absolved from any further responsibility or the obligation to institute fundamental changes in lifestyle. What concerns Sandel is that "commodifying and individuating responsibility for greenhouse gasses could have the same paradoxical effect as charging for late pick-ups at childcare centres, producing more bad behaviour rather than less "(p.78). Indeed, the author warns against the extension of market-oriented thinking "into spheres of life traditionally governed by nonmarket norms - health, education, procreation, refugee policy [and] environmental protection" (p.79).

And yet, it is not all morally straightforward. Sandel addresses the paradox of paying (up to \$150 000) to kill a black rhino legally under strict and limited (five hunts per year) license approved by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. In South Africa where this practice was sanctioned in 2004, private landowners have an incentive to protect and nurture their black rhino populations, and numbers have been increasing. In Kenya, where the hunting of rhino remains prohibited, rhino populations have fallen drastically as land is cleared of native

vegetation and converted to agriculture and cattle farming. Loss of habitat likewise threatens orangutans and gorillas, though the market solution here is to diversify into up-market tourism. The Inuit have also crossed the boundary from traditional to market economy. In the 1990s they negotiated with the Canadian government the right to sell some of their walrus quota to big game hunters. The number of walrus killed remained the same, but the trophy hunting industry (at \$6500 per walrus killed by hunters) generated employment, and the meat remained with the local community. Sandel is sensitive to the moral entanglements of trophy hunting as a means of conserving an endangered species or providing local employment through 'lethal tourism'. Confronted with the choice between the 'moral ugliness of trophy hunting' and the almost certain extinction of a species in the wild, should the market solution be dismissed offhand? Wisely, Sandel leaves us to engage with these contested views according to our own moral reasoning. Nevertheless he issues a warning:

"The notion that economics is a value-free science independent of moral and political philosophy has always been questionable. But the vaunting ambition of economics today makes this claim especially difficult to defend. The more markets extend their reach into noneconomic spheres of life, the more entangled they become with moral questions.. So when market reasoning travels beyond the domain of material goods, it must 'traffic in morality', unless it wants blindly to maximize social utility without regard for the moral worth of the preferences it satisfies" (pp.88-89).

Once again the author returns to the childcare centre example showing how fines treated as fees for service effectively eroded the moral obligation to respect the needs of childcare workers who had to stay behind monitoring the children of late parents. Displacing shared expectations of mutual obligation may be even more damaging in cooperatives or organisations relying on volunteers. Sandel thus warns against applying financial incentives blindly - whether to get kids to read more, or to entice adults to be punctual. "We need to ask whether these incentives will corrupt attitudes and norms worth protecting. To answer this question market reasoning must become moral reasoning. The economist has to 'traffic in morality' after all" (p.91).

In a slight shift in emphasis, Sandel then moves to explain how markets crowd out morals, notably through quantifying the value of (unwanted, unneeded) gifts at Christmas, compared to items carefully purchased by the individual. Apparently items received as gifts are valued 20% less, per dollar spent, than items purchased by oneself. Conclusion: Americans celebrate the holidays (Christmas) in "an orgy of value destruction" [!] (p.100). This phenomenon has given rise to the 'monetizing' of gifts, as in gift cards that represent a halfway house between choosing a specific gift and giving cash. From a purely economic, logical point of view, this approach is an improvement as it enables the individual to purchase their own gift, albeit in a store of the gift card giver's choice. To be totally rational and optimize the value of the gift, it would be best to hand over cash "which is like a gift card that is redeemable anywhere"(p.105). Needless to say, Sandel finds this commercializing of gift-giving as a morally sterile exchange. Interestingly, a market solution has already evolved in the States where a gift voucher for say, \$100 at a specified shop can be exchanged

at some online companies for cash (at a price lower than the face value of the voucher, say \$80) which the company then resells to a third party for \$90 - a triple win situation completely removed from the intent and context of gift-giving. A similar corruption of values applies to some conferring of honorific degrees and bestowing civic honours on individuals. It is not always the truly meritorious who receive such awards, and the kick-back in endowments and other advantages are not part of the overt equation.

Sandel posits two objections to markets and market-driven exchanges. The first relates to the **inequality** that may underlie market choices, as for example, the selling of a kidney, blood or babies by the poorer sectors of society; the second involves the **corruption** of attitudes and norms in the market situation - irrespective of conditions of equality and inequality. This would apply to prostitution for example, whether driven by poverty, drug addiction, the threat of violence or as a voluntary lifestyle choice. In all these instances, Sandel argues that the intrinsic value of a woman's body and sexuality is corrupted and devalued. I suspect that not all readers would necessarily agree with this evaluation of voluntary prostitution, but Sandel's point remains valid: that humans have a propensity for moral reckoning which defies plain economics and marketing logic. As an example he cites the small Swiss village of Wolfenschiessen (pop.2100) that in 1993, by a slim majority of 51%, accepted to become the repository of a nuclear waste site as it had been identified nationally as the most appropriate location. Apparently the villagers were motivated by a sense of civic duty that outweighed their concern about the risks. However, when economists added a sweetener: that each resident would receive an annual monetary payment in compensation, support for the scheme nosedived to 25%. This counter intuitive reaction underlines the latent moral values that inform our judgments. The villagers had been prepared to accept the nuclear waste site, without reward, for the sake of the public good. The offer of a cash incentive felt like a bribe and transformed a civic question into a pecuniary one. Or in Sandel's terms, "the intrusion of market norms crowded out their sense of civic duty" (p.116). Sandel goes further: *personal* compensation for *public* harm or inconvenience (e.g. the location of a nuclear waste dump or new airport), is morally less acceptable than a public reward, say a new library, that will benefit all the community, strengthen it and honour its public spirit.

Sandel argues strongly against the 'commercialization effect' that changes the character of goods and the social practices that they govern. For example the American Association of Retired Persons asked a group of lawyers if they would provide services for needy retirees at a discounted rate of \$30 per hour. The lawyers refused. The AARP then asked them if they would provide their services for free; the lawyers agreed. "Once it was clear they were being asked to engage in a charitable activity rather than an [underpaid] market transaction, the lawyers responded charitably (p.120). Sandel warns that we erode at our own peril such unspoken values as informal exchange, mutual obligation, feelings of service or obligation, and altruism or love. "Introducing money into a nonmarket setting can change people's attitudes and crowd out moral and civic commitments" (p.119)."When people are engaged in an activity they consider intrinsically worthwhile, offering them money

may weaken their motivation by depreciating or 'crowding out' their inherent interest or commitment"(p.122). To underline his point Sandel cites the research of Richard Titmuss in his 1970 book *The Gift Relationship* in which the British sociologist compares blood donors in the United Kingdom (where all blood for transfusion is given by unpaid volunteer donors) and the USA where some blood is donated and some bought by commercial blood banks. Analysis showed that the British blood collection system works better. "Despite the supposed efficiency of markets...the American system leads to chronic shortages, wasted blood, higher costs, and a greater risk of contaminated blood" (p.123). Specifically, Titmuss notes that for-profit blood banks in the USA draw much of their supply from Skid Row residents desperate for money. "Commercialization of blood leads to more blood being supplied by the poor, the unskilled, the unemployed, Negroes and other low income groups" - a new class of exploited high blood donors who effectively redistribute blood from the poor to the rich (p.123). More tellingly there has been an overall decline in voluntary giving of blood. "Commercialization and profit in blood has been driving out the voluntary donor...The widespread buying and selling of blood demoralizes the practice of giving blood for free"(p.124). The declining spirit of giving, in turn makes for an impoverished moral and social life by repressing the expression of altruism and eroding the sense of community. Sandel adds to this conundrum. In a world where blood is routinely bought and sold, is donating blood still an act of generosity? Might it not be deemed an unfair labour practice that deprives needy persons of gainful employment selling their blood? Rather than give blood, might we not more usefully donate money, say \$50, which might then be used to buy blood from a homeless person who needs the income? All is not as simple as might seem in a (moral) market world.

More fundamentally, Sandel argues that the virtues of civic duty and public spirit, like our personal capacities for love, compassion and benevolence, are conserved and fostered by being exercised. He reminds us of Aristotle's adage that virtue is something to be cultivated with practice:" We become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts" (p.119). Rousseau argued the same point when he stated that civic virtue is built up, not spent down, by strenuous citizenship. Sandel puts it this way: "Altruism, generosity, solidarity, and civic spirit are not like commodities depleted by use. They are more like muscles that develop and grow stronger with exercise" (p.130). As the popular saying goes: use it or lose it.

The dedicated reader who has followed the summary of Sandel's argument to this point will not be surprised that Sandel's two final chapters deal with Markets in Life and Death, and Naming Rights. The first deals with the extraordinary dealings in personal life insurance, often taken out and paid up (or sold to a third party) on behalf of employees by their employers, or frail nursing home residents by health companies, *unbeknown to those insured*. Alternatively elderly folk may be offered a free cruise in return for a medical examination and signing up to life insurance while on board (p. 158). The gamble is that those thus ensured will die within a certain time span, making the collection of insurance monies a profitable venture. It is a little

known fact that "after the Sept. 11 terror attacks, some of the first life-insurance payments went not to the victim's families but to their employers"(p.134). The argument is that such insurance payout is not to be regarded as a welcome windfall for the employers but fair compensation for training and replacing the deceased. A specialized vocabulary has arisen round variants to this practice: the **janitor's insurance** (who doesn't know he has been insured, also applied to ailing or terminally ill individuals), **viaticals** (initially prompted by the AIDS epidemic, offering cash for voluntary signing up and relinquishing rights to proceeds of life insurance), **death pools** referring to Internet gambling on the predicted death of celebrities, and **death bonds** where corporations or banks buy up large numbers of life insurance policies, package and resell them to investors/speculators (p.161). Need one go on? As Sandel's extrapolation on these themes draws almost exclusively on US examples, I see little point in elaborating further except to point out that the extension of market reckoning to matters of life versus death, where the extension of life beyond the insurer's expectation is seen as a financial 'horror story' (p.137) corrodes not only the corporations concerned but points to the depths to which we are capable of sinking as a society in our quest for easy money. When people are objectified as commodities whose worth is greater dead than alive, we must surely pause to reflect on the trajectory that we have entered in our market, winner-takes-all society.

In his final chapter Sandel discusses the convolutions and financial shenanigans behind naming rights. At one end is what started as the relatively innocuous collection of sports memorabilia. By the 1980s though, "the innocent autograph scrum had been displaced by a billion-dollar memorabilia business dominated by brokers, wholesalers, and the teams themselves" (p.164) with a keen sense to the increase in value of such memorabilia over time. Not surprisingly, Sandel observes that "the conversion of baseball keepsakes into commodities changed the relation of fans to the game and to one another" (p.166). In the past, a record-breaking baseball hit into the grandstand was returned to the players as a matter of courtesy and honesty; nowadays such balls are a potential source of lucrative speculation. Fights over a ball have been known to lead to bitterly contested court cases (p.166). Market values have eaten away and transformed the norms of sportsmanship. In fact, even the soil of the old Yankee Stadium was collected before it was torn down. "The bucket containing the sacred earth was sealed and marked with an authenticator's hologram, then sold by the spoonful to fans and collectors" (p.168), one memorabilia company claiming to have sold over \$10 million worth of authentic Yankee Stadium dirt [!] So far, so mildly crazy, but it is not difficult to extrapolate from the commercialization of competitive sports and associated products, to the emergence of professional sport cheats, endemic corruption and games fixing at the highest managerial levels.

Sandel goes on to discuss the competitive nature of naming rights, with corporations seeking to outbid each other in the quest to impact on the public through advertising. Australia is a minor player in this respect, but the trend exists, thus the AAMI Stadium, the Santos Museum of Economic Botany and so on. However corporate naming rights can and do insinuate themselves beyond the billboard or signage

above the gate. TV broadcasters and radio jocks are known to push products with varying degrees of subtlety, while in Australia we have had the recent scandal over the promotion of online betting during major sporting events. Though speaking of American values, Sandel's description of sports applies equally to Australia: "sports stadiums are the cathedrals of our civic religion, public places that gather people from different walks of life in rituals of loss and hope, profanity and prayer"(p.173). True to type, Sandel sounds a warning. If sport moves beyond civic identity and becomes a business, then other values fall by the wayside. As an example he cites the advent of 'skyboxes', luxury corporate secluded seating areas - costing up to \$350 000 a season - usually located high above the field of play. These effectively "separate the affluent and the privileged from the common folk in the stands below... insulating the swells from the hoi polloi in one of the most stratified seating arrangements in American entertainment "(p.173). Skyboxes are effectively the sporting equivalent of gated communities. Whereas sports had once been looked upon as a leveler and common focus for spectators of all social strata, its commercialization or corporatization, at least in America, has undermined the social bonds and civic sentiments that once were at its very heart. I think Sandel may be overstating his argument, but its gist warrants consideration.

Sandel's final salvo is aimed at the advertising industry and I would not spend time on this ubiquitous manipulator of public consciousness, but for some quite novel (pun intended) aspects of so-called **paid product placement**. In 2001 the Italian jewelry company Bulgari commissioned the British novelist Fay Weldon to write a book at their behest. Aptly titled *The Bulgari Connection*, the novel "exceeded the required number of product references, mentioning Bulgari thirty-four times" (p.181). Corporate sponsorship knows few bounds and Sandel astonishes one with references to private vehicles or family homes turned into billboards - for a fee of course (p.182). This form of advertisement took a new dimension in 1998 when a small Mexican restaurant in San Francisco offered free lunch for life to anyone willing to have the restaurant's logo tattooed on their body, not expecting many, if any, takers (p.183). Within months more than forty people were walking the streets of the city sporting the Casa Sanchez tattoo - their passport to a regular daily meal. A few years later an agency in London began selling advertising space on people's foreheads, though the tattoos in this instance were temporary and described as "an extension of the sandwich board, but a bit more organic [!]" (pp.183-4). Sandel rebukes those who would justify the practice on the grounds that no one is coerced to offer their car, family home, body or forehead as paid advertising space. Predictably, he points out that their argument is flawed for the same two reasons that he denounced the intrusion of market values into everyday life at the outset of his book: such advertising operates on the basis of **inequality** (it is the needy who are likely to offer themselves for this sort of publicity) and thereby **corrupts** and/or degrades the moral dignity that should apply to all citizens (p.187).

In the final analysis, we cannot eschew the moral question of what constitutes the good life and what it is that actively undermines it. This is no simple task given that so much of western society at least, is geared to consumerism that is embedded and

enforced from childhood onwards. However commercialism is not necessarily always bad. What Sandel asks is that we "bring our moral and spiritual convictions into the public square...Shrinking from these questions does not leave them undecided. It simply means that markets will decide them for us...Our only hope of keeping markets in their place is to deliberate openly and publicly about the meaning of the goods and social services that we prize" (p.202). In essence, we need to ask the bigger question: what kind of society do we want? "In the end, the question of markets is really a question about how we want to live together. Do we want a society where everything is up for sale? Or are there certain moral and civil goods that markets do not honor and money cannot buy?"(p. 203). Thus gracefully, Sandel bows out with a rhetorical question. For the thoughtful reader, the time for serious reflection begins and with it, the obligation to act.

[Readers comments are invited - Ed]

"If your plan is for one year, plant rice. If your plan is for ten years, plant trees. If your plan is for one hundred years, educate children." - Confucius
