AFTER THE DAY JOB

Sixteenth Century Reformation of the church was rapid, not because a new perception of Christianity caught fire, but because church and monastic property was released for plundering by powerful élites. The protestant reformation gave credence to stolen property. Luther, Calvin and Knox are innocent of that theft.

Andy Wightman’s The Poor Had No Lawyers eloquently expresses the same for the Scottish Reformation:

Knox’s plans, laid out in The First Book of Discipline, were that the teinds of all Church land should be used by the Reformed Church for three purposes, namely:

a) For the upkeep of the kirk

b) For the support of the disabled and the aged poor and the provision of work for the unemployed and

c) For a public elementary school for every child.

In other words the reformed church would continue and also improve the social work of the monasteries.

The Scot’s nobles, just as the English had done, affected a reformed Christian attitude simply to get their hands on large tracts of old church and monastic lands and their spoils.

John Knox was to write of his despair (Book of Discipline):

With the grief of our hearts we hear that some gentlemen are now as cruel over their tenants as ever were the Papists....

Today, a schismatic doctrine of Science as “technology” is used to give credence to the “knowledge economy.” Science is as innocent as John Knox. Power is guilty. As new enclosures are woven into gold, ancient and inherited intellectual commons have become private property. Of course many a protestant minister of the church has been as guilty as power in supporting and benefitting from it – just as many a “scientist” is as guilty as the power which pays her.

Historically, the powerful have been happily fed, clothed and housed by the skills of their subject rude mechanicals. But the massive powers of oil have given unskilled power a lust to control what has replaced people. The probity, curiosity and dexterity of Bottom the Weaver have been displaced by a foolish and hubristic application of oil tools. A protestant reformation of catholic science, whose central doctrine has been scepticism, has justified a new “science” whose central doctrine is futuristic technology. The technological roles of Snug the Joiner and his friends, which had been morally-defined, have been handed to an unskilled and amoral new priesthood. Amorality is a radical part of the schism – that is “scientific truth” can override moral scruple.

Of course, amorality is a first principle of curious, sceptical and catholic science while historically all technologies have had morals, because all actions have consequence. So the protestant schism has redefined technology as science, so that it can shift amorality from science to technology. The oil-
powerful control the oil-powered tools which have created the consumer culture – without commons of restraint. The nightmare of amoral tools for amoral consumption has created an amoral climatic consequence – the Anthropocene. Knox may have called it the Wrath of God. We may call it the reaction of ignored physical truth.

Andy Wightman supplies me with another highly-appropriate quote from Mackintosh’s History of Scotland.

*Many of the nobles, from motives of self-interest, professed a willingness to embrace the reformed opinions, and gradually ranked themselves on the side of the Reformers; as time passed, and the prospects of the division of the spoil approached, they became more and more ardent in their adherence to the principles of the reformation.*

For *ardent for the principles of the reformation*, we can substitute a post modern ardour for the pretence that commercial technology has anything to do with science.

Here’s how it is in Efland: True, amoral science is sceptical and aloof from its applications. Technology (which may have learnt from scientific data) is always moral, because it acts and all acts have consequence.

Here’s how it is in today’s nightmare: The fervour apparent in both religious and scientific reformations has been for neither religion nor, science but for wealth and power.

Who knows where a both more catholic and sceptical science may be hiding? Let’s hope some decent people have provided some decent priest holes.

The end of civilisation (where our nightmare is heading) has been created by application of doctrinal ideas to problems which can only be solved by physical trial and error. The doctrine projects the natural world as a macrocosm of human understanding. The central doctrinal fantasy is that ideas can replace resources. What’s more those ideas will be exclusively provided by an appropriately-educated, peer-reviewed, druidic élite.

The pre-oil powerful had depended without question on working peoples’ ingenuity with tools. Crop husbandry, cuisine, clothing, architecture, trade and the trades were all managed by rude mechanicals, *working for bread upon Athenian stalls*. Now, the unprecedented power released by oil has given the traditionally-idle a passion to control the tools themselves. (As mentioned, the energy in a litre of oil has been variously calculated as equivalent to two to three weeks of manual labour.)

I say “a passion” because knowledge has never been (and never will be) a function of power. As we know, oil tools are wildly and unreasonably out of control. Common values, doubts, knowledge, ingenuity and dexterity are powerlessly-confined to Bottom the Weaver’s garden shed.

The placing of honest tools in the hands of amoral Power is unique to the Twentieth and Twenty First centuries. Not only has technology been presented as a doctrine of state, (protestant cults of progress and economic growth), but worse: simple probity has been systematically ridiculed as anachronistic to the progressive times.
Of course, happy and useful tools and methods have been and always will be devised and refined as those tools and methods are applied – by the trial and error of rude mechanicals.

Moreover, happy and curious science has and always will be sceptical and aloof from its applications.

This is not to say that rude mechanicals cannot be well-read in and fascinated by the scientific literature – nor to say that a scientist may not doff her scepticism (after the day job) to do some useful tinkering in her garden shed.

You can see that both sceptical scientist and rude mechanic coexist happily in my midsummer night’s dream.

Incidentally, so do a spiritual life – and an “artistic” life. The spiritual, artistic, sceptical, moral and practical coexist happily in the same human frame – just as reductionist and holistic thought are both essential to a healthy frame of mind.

Anyway, technology has been given a new title fitting the dignity of office. It has been crazily renamed as science. A cast of druidic “scientists” must give credence to all we do before we do it and must stamp the goods in our market places – food; medicines; machinery with the statutory mark of the Druidgeld. A stock phrase of post-modern politics is, *Wait for the science.*

When waiting for peer review, Post Modernity waits for her druidic peers.

*Science druids* follow a cult of enclosed progress. As new chapters are added to the doctrine, so intellectual properties are added and sold to “industry” by the lucrative process of “technology transfer” – a euphemism for the progressively expanding enclosures of the “knowledge economy”; *for the progressively prolonged sleep of the nightmare.*

We must remember the following first principle when meeting druidic regulation, or if a druid calls for Druid Geld – or if by chance, we fall into seductive conversation with a druid:  

*Ideas cannot replace resources.*

That simple (now schismatic) truth is re-enforced by another:

*There has not been a single advance in “thought” since the thinking process began, whereas, tools have been improved and made appropriate for changing circumstances by the trial and error of generations.*

The physics of the world is in flux and we adapt to it with adapted tools – *but by using the same old thought processes.* Here’s a test: Those who present themselves as advanced thinkers must either be entranced in druidic nightmare, or drunk on ideas of power. Do modern minds have greater power, subtlety and good humour than that which devised A Midsummer-Night’s Dream in Fifteen Ninety Eight? Are modern leaders any less stupid than Theseus, Hippolyta, Helena, Hermia, Lysander and Demetrius, who mocked the hard-handed patches, Bottom, Snug, Quince, Flute and so on – without whom they’d have no wine, bread, clothing; no roofs over their vain and helpless heads?
Fortunately for the silliness of Theseus, all was provided by Peter Quince & crew. Unfortunately for post-modernity, all is provided by the silliness of Theseus.

That is why we must have a mass evacuation of the ring roads, retail parks, air ports and high-speed rail links of Theseus’s folly.

I must point out that folly is perennial to humanity and that it is only by folly that we improve our tools. Folly is not confined to the powerful. However, the “ideas” and “sciences” of the powerful are and never have been fit for tool-making. Tools can be improved only by those who use them.

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