

**Reprising
HG Wells's 'World Brain'
through Homeplanet Learning Enrichment Hubs
as metaphor for holistic-education to harness a sentient internet,
and as an alternative to techno-utopian
Transhumanity**

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Readers Note: I have revisited, rather than revised, this piece some 20 years after I first wrote it and have chosen to leave it essentially as is with some updating as in those days the Internet barely existed. And then I asked Mitchell Gold to edit and add his thoughts.

Introduction

The prophetic views of HG Wells' call in the 1930s for a world brain seem answered in part by the rapidly growing infrastructure of the World Wide Web. Yet, will this latest techno-fix of the post-modern human, restore our lost wisdom or provide meaning for our youth who seem to have lost their way? This article argues that we need to go towards a 'World Brain' and then beyond to 'World Mind' and even further out to 'World Soul' when we again arrive at 'World Brain' and truly know what it means for the first time. This will mean going beyond current educational paradigms, now including even the internet, towards a holistic learning one. Here, learning will occur through relationship. It is to this end I devote considerable discussion of a vision for future 'Hubs of holistic learning and meaning'.

World Brain

HG Wells had the view that the apparatus of modern intellectual ability is not being put to good use. For him, collective views on how we should proceed are sadly lacking in modern humanity, even more so as time passes.

He asks poignantly: **Why are our universities floating above the general disorder (battlefield) of mankind like a beautiful sunset over a battlefield?** Now we recall Bosnia, Babi Yar, Auschwitz, Rwanda, Abu Ghraib – all of which happened after Wells's prescient words. Indeed, in my opinion that since the Second World War our education systems in general and Universities in particular, have done nothing other than credential the status quo by being little more than knowledge control vehicles for the dominant orthodoxy as it marches into the eco-battle fields of tomorrow, struggles of its own making.

Even worse, the world seems ever more chaotic and less and less organized, even to the point of the great international hope, the UN, being reduced to a warfare apologist, and would be welfare centre, for the recent civil unrest in Eastern Europe etc. How are we going to deliver our world to our children's children's children? How can we co-ordinate our education systems when universities promise so much but seem to deliver little more than sanctifying the status quo?

Wells' book is mainly a collection of radio talks given in the mid 1930s. These are contexted by an extensive 70 page critical introduction by Alan Mayne which teases out further implications of 'World Brain' as he looks back from some 60 years on.

The three principal aspects of Wells' thesis are:

- World Brain (later in life he used 'Mind')
- Distilling the knowledge thus generated into a world encyclopaedia
- Filtering this down into general education

This approach really does provide a firm case for future university as a distributed encyclopaedia that codifies the world's knowledge. This, for us, is indeed a worthy and urgent aim, respecting of course the diversity inherent in world cultures. Wildman (1999), (2006). I wonder how much the web can contribute to this and if not, how can this ever happen. It seems further and further removed from manifesting at present. As it was written in the mid-1930s the book has an 'empire' mentality. However, it does show a remarkable perspicacity and cultural eclecticism which proposes harmonizing our cultural diversity rather than centralizing it to Western conformity. I think that Wikipedia offers some hope that such an encyclopedia can be created but some form of meta tags need be applied to enable a process of holistic application of thoughts for search engines to locate.

With the meta narratives of empire now thoroughly occluded from our post modern world, the questions remain. We take Wells' challenge and carry it through into the design of holistic education systems in a post modern world? We explain multiplicity of ways of knowing in the world. We can now do this with over 90% of the earth's cultures being a combination of oral and visual through the sophisticated use of the internet and the Smart phone working together. We are no longer separated by our cultural language or rituals and biases.

In this way, 'world brain' will express itself as a 'field of dreams of meaning'. Such a 'morphogenic field' is, in part, an expression of planetary consciousness or 'noosphere'. Learning processes create individual and organizational patterns, like song lines, in this organic global consciousness (Judge, 1996). In this sense World Brain becomes these 'song lines' compared to the materialistic, industrialized metaphor of 'information highway'.

What used to be a "belief system" is now a "knowing system". Certainly belief was good. But knowing is better.

What can we draw from this challenge by relating to its immediacy and relevance in the era of the web? We no longer have to ask these questions:

- Are universities any better today than in HG Wells' time?
- Do organisations interested in holistic education for our futures (e.g. New Renaissance and World Futures Studies Federation) have plans for some sort of internet equivalent of world mind?
- How can we dream of wise world governance without the dysfunctional United Nations or artificial bureaucratic constructs and deadly austerity projects in a united Europe?
- Can we wait the 20 or so years for internet to organize itself towards 'world mind' or will it be censored out of existence or degenerate into petty personal interests?
- How can each of us harmonize our contribution within the bigger pictures?

The why of this is obvious. We have the solution. We just have to implement it.

'World Brain' today as 'World Mind'

Today we know 'world brain' is sufficient for the challenges of today. Towards the end of his life

HG Wells used the term ‘World Mind’ to move beyond the purely organic nature of thinking and knowing. Certainly at this junction in Global Futures greater respect for, and awareness of world wisdoms and ‘ways of knowing’ are a necessity.

What Jean Houston points out in her works particularly *Jump Time* (2004) notion has become our reality. We can express ideas that are so large that our minds have difficulty comprehending it – yet we do, e.g. the idea of one light year. We have been able to understand it as a real distance. We have expanded our capacity to understand this multiplied by a million – and then a hundred million and then again by 13.5 billion. Or so we think. Our thoughts can travel that far in a second. And back? This sense of largeness has affected our world view. On the other side of size we have come to know that our DNA is only 140 K variations. How different are we? Not much? (Houston, 1994, 2004, 2010).

Yet how do we move with this new understanding of our intimate reality? How do we elucidate creative thought and incorporate it into education? In this article our explorations towards ‘holistic education’ investigate five ‘ways of knowing’ and the generations of the educational systems they produce.

The first three generations of education are exoteric and may be considered as rational. The next two generations seek to extend this to include an esoteric/soul dimension. A most concerning aspect of investigating holistic education is just how strongly existing systems of education, knowledge and learning are ‘owned’ by the Nation State which determines minute aspects of the curricula and indeed these embedded by law in the first three. As we move through these learning systems one moves from World Brain, to World Mind to World Soul. The following section details these five ways of knowing in terms of approaches to education.

Five Generations to Holistic Education

Please note: these generations are written from the perspective of Adult Education and need to be modified somewhat for application to pedagogy – children’s education.

1. First generation education – lecture

The student, the text and the teacher as ‘sage on stage’

The teacher is a content expert who has minimal relationship to the student. The expert learning system of scientific education generates ‘**factual knowledge**’. This is the realm of traditional pedagogical processes such as university and mainstream school education.

2. Second generation education – co-authored text

The student and the text, and the teacher as ‘guide on the side’

Here the teacher relates to the text as the student relates to it. The consultant learning system of technical/techne education produces ‘**theoretical knowledge**’. This is the realm of higher education, seminars and so forth.

3. Third generation education – living

The student and the text and the teacher as co-learners and co-praxisers ‘teacher as colleague’ Here the teacher becomes co-researcher with the student in exploring the text. The action learning system of practice/praxis education produces ‘**practical and professional knowledge** –

learning from ones lived life'. This is the realm of ongoing professional learning, for instance on the job learning that impacts learning/theory and practice. This is the realm of parts of the University system e.g. medical, engineering faculties, Voc ed, i.e. technical and further education aimed at the skill level directly vocationally relevant. This also reflects the old craft guilds that led to the apprenticeship systems

4. Fourth generation education – praxis

The student and the text and the praxis and the teacher and their world views – teacher as 'elder and co-adventurer (yearn, learn, earn, return) with their world views'.

Here the teacher's and the student's world views are identified and transformed by the learning experience. The open systems learning system of insight education produces a **creative knowledge** that leads to '**insight wisdom**' through symbolic logic — 'symbolic'. This is the realm of poetry, artistic expression and lifelong learning, what we call 'life wise learning' and 'world wide learning'. The web is amenable to this type of learning, as is self-directed 'street learning' or learning from life. Furthermore, generations four and five acknowledge to esoteric dimensions of learning.

5. Fifth generation education – co-creation

Holistic education.

The student and the text and its praxis and the student's fellow students, i.e. collegiate learners. Here the teacher becomes 'collegiate sage on stage again but this time as co-creator/co-elder with her students'

The co-generative emancipatory learning system of holistic/relational education produces **knowledge of and for 'community** or *communitas*'. This may even require a 'subversity' as the conventional university has all but collapsed in relevance to the global challenges we face Wildman (2013). Here holistic is a counterpoint to our present reductionist and mercantile culture and also recognizes the reality of holons and a positive sum game where the parts add up to more than the whole. Maturana (1997). In this model, the teacher is no longer identifiable as a discrete entity/purpose and students or 'associates' are involved in peer-assisted, relational co-learning, even co-'eldering' as a fellow journey person – master craftsman. Here, androgogy through the Adult and Community Learning Circle, e-library, v-University or electronic bulletin board come into their own.⁴ In the last two generations education seeks to broaden away from its anthropocentric roots. Nor is it indeed a technomorphic confabulation. Indeed where society and culture are not seen as an annex of the market rather they are part of a Gaia-centric/planetary action learning system that sees Earth as our Homeplanet and it in itself only a tiny speck in the cosmos.

And more so, in educational generations four and five, we start to identify another player in the learning equation — that of Gaia herself in relation with us. Now at last we can see ourselves at one with the plants and animals that co-inhabit our world. That is, education to be part of "World Soul". We and Gaia become part of the noosphere created in our time, largely through computer mediated communication, the World Wide Web and our ability to move our thoughts out into the universe – and look back at ourselves from a new perspective. In ancient times, still with us in some indigenous cultures, this came through dreaming's, telepathy and rather specific ceremonies

that can be duplicated. In this sense we can use HG Wells' concept of World Brain as a concrete expression of noosphere.

Generally, traditional education systems locate in the first three generations and alternative education systems locate in fourth and fifth generations. We maintain that HG Wells' world mind ideally suits these latter two generations. Indeed, world mind could well provide the learning backdrop for fifth generation education processes. With Wikipedia designing content and GOOGLE providing search capacities then the linking of all computers provides us with the tools to explore what we might care to explore as Global Mind, Global Brain.

Holistic as Relational Education

For us, the concept of holistic is implicitly relational and suggests a category of relational knowledge which is 'credualised' but not 'credentialised'. We maintain such a knowledge system is largely lacking in the West. Reiterating the generational styles of education described above, in Western terms we speak of knowledge for:

- Knowing (scientific - scientia)
- Doing (technical - techne)
- Being (practice - praxis).

Yet we seldom speak of a knowledge of time and space that calls upon our capacity for:

- Seeing (insight – gnosis)
- Connecting or relating from (relatio - Latin for having reference, to bring or carry back).

What is even more intriguing is that 'legitimised' systems of knowledge we have make links between thinking and things rather than people. That is between thought and action with things, not between people as part of manifest Dreamtime or Gaia. This article argues for holistic education is necessarily relational. *[Review: Please see Wildman and Inayatullah (1996) for a technical explication of these types of knowledge. This article was not published at the time of writing the original of this article].*

Isn't this yet another scene in the great Western tragedy? Possibly this is a function of the maleness and patriarchy of our educational systems. The Maya now point out that the next 26000 year cycle calls upon the women to step into their power. (but to be gentle with us) Men generally tend to be separate creatures who construct knowledge in order to act on things, not to relate to one another. Gaia is suffering because of this. Women intuit this. And the aspect of intuition might be better learned as the twelfth sense after knowing and memory – and keeping the other nine dimensions of our sense experience fully present. (adding balance, temperature, time and space to what we have come to call our senses)

In the next section we use the **Futures Studies Strategies**, we now prefer the term **Futures Praxis Exemplars** of visioning and scenario-building, in an attempt to imagine how holistic inter-relational future learning Hubs might look.

Future World Brain Nodes — Holistic Learning Enrichment Hub

The relational space we envision for holistic education will be called something like a ‘Centre of Holistic Learning and Wellness’. In the very near future we will come to realise just how important it is for World Brain to become ‘World Mind’ and move towards becoming ‘World Soul’. This will require the ability for the generation of localised expression and meaning. We will realise its urgency by recognising how much we do not have it at present. These Learning Enrichment Hubs/Nodes (LEH/LEN) of Meaning, as World Brain nodes, will act as focal points in each corporation or community organisation. *[On review looking back from 2013 I must say the web is looking distinctly like ‘world brain’ has yet to emerge and as it does we see some worrying features that suggest we have not learnt from Fascism and its affect on all human freedoms.]*

Such an organization* will not be limited to the geographic sense we have now and will be inclusive of the global links that form electronically, i.e. cyber organisations. The LEH’s will have the individualised flavour of *harmonising diversity not centralising conformity* so their organisation and will be freely linked, through individuals and networks, to other ‘like-minded’ or complementary Hubs. It is our understanding that such Hubs replace the past-oriented, tradition-bound schools and universities of today. In this section we will attempt to describe one such Centre.

The Hub

There will be a location, a focal place/plane where people may congregate f2f or f2s, while not necessarily being ‘required’ to spend 40 hours a week. It would house a combination of studios, theatres, workspaces for indoor and outdoor activities. The emphasis would depend on the needs of the community being serviced. The venue is a place for dialogue, planning, thinking-intuiting, creative, artistic, expression as well as a model of sustainable living with gardens, etc. (an eco-feast). Styles of architecture would reflect the cultures and imaginations of the organisation involved. The focal areas would move concentrically out into the organisation, so that while there is an inner and an outer part of the organisation no one is quite sure where it begins and ends. Teachers and students will be telepresent.

The learning

Holistic education will mean peer assisted, relational 5th Generation, co-learning and a recognition of various types of work as equally valuable. These types of vocation being:

- **Intellectual/noetic** or what used to be called academic. This is now extended to include exemplifying ones ethics in ones lifestyle become transdisciplinary and includes environmental sustainability and respect for indigenous cultures
- **Practical**, as in vocational education and the trades
- **Praxis** and practical as in management and the professions
- **Esoteric and intuitive** including aesthetic/poetic, artistic and visual performance
- **Relational**, as in learning to relate as a final synthesis of the above forms of learning, simultaneously embedding a strong link to others, our environment and cosmos as a

valued aim of education, that is connection to extending World Brain to 'World Mind' and thence to 'World Soul'!

For a person to do 'learning coaching', a holistic approach will be applied from the segmented concept of teaching in the existing more instrumental and discipline-riddled paradigm. Learning facilitators will have considerable experience in several vocations as well as a deep understanding and practice of at least two types of learning/education. Such transdisciplinary breadth of experience maximises synthesis capability which is a major underpinning paradigm of the Hubs of Holistic Learning and Meaning. It will also lead to humility and a management style which overcomes the disadvantages of the old narrow academic disciplines of the 19th and 20th century, breadth of experience and synthesis capability and capacities are recognised as carriers of leaning. Openness to learning is also prized and the learning coaches are always students as well.

The students

Students are of all ages and cultures, for when jobs redefine themselves, schools will no longer be job factories as youth will deeply question their 'raison d'être' and that of society. Since 1993 it has been known that the 'death of jobs' will be our reality. (OECD Yearly Report) Additionally true is the death of logic. Focus on jobs is a red herring as a tool for measuring health of an economy. When you are not working – it means you are doing your job really well. The organized manager has a very clean desk as every one that is working with him is getting their job done. Contrast that with the vision of a busy manager whose desk is piled high with papers and frantically moving from one file to another. Only by becoming involved in the Hubs of Holistic Learning and Meaning as students and workers (gardeners, builders, artisans) will they learn from the adults around them and vice versa. [*On review again this has not happened and this opportunity has been lost nowadays the retirement age has been extended and gaining a job is even and ever more important in Government policy*]. And more importantly one questions why they might retire at all – just to hit a golf ball around a golf course?

Courses

These will be jointly constructed by the learners themselves in consultation with organizational learning coaches and other students, according to their needs and interests of the broader society. There will be a balance of units from the major meta-meaning areas. Basic courses could be taken at a range of hubs, either by travel, exchange or electronically through the successor of internet. These would be complete when the students believe they have enough general understanding of themselves and 'the meaning of life' to undertake a special interest or professional course (Redshaw, 1995).

Assessment of level of meaning comprehension would be arranged in consultation with their coaches and peers and involve a combination of thesis, artistic production, action project and meta-analysis in terms of both ecological and esoteric impact. Evaluation would be based on the 'contribution to meaning', and the life-evolving (esoteric) and life-enhancing (ecstatic) properties of the project would be included.

Costs 'n credits

These would be shared between the student, the host organization, and where necessary, the State. In this scenario, the Hubs will have significant latitude for cost recovery through consultancy and up-front fees, and individuals and organizations will have significant tax

advantage from assisting themselves and their members' respective involvement in these learning processes.

Possibly local (alternative) currency will be accepted in part for fees. In terms of accreditation and quality assurance, these hubs of meaning will act as self-referencing, jointly moderating learning networks that include formal and informal learning. This is in line with present developments in the more innovative end of today's universities and private learning centres, e.g. semi-autonomous commercial faculties, independent (business) schools and private universities. There will be no need for a 'big daddy' learning accreditor to determine what is and isn't learning.

Learning as co-creation

We are in what may be called the Co-creation Society. For instance Jensen (1996) traces five techno-economic societies — hunter gatherer, agricultural, industrial, information and now the 'dream society'. In this society, he argues, the production and distribution of information will have been routinised. The cutting edge in learning systems will go to those individuals, organizations (and Hubs for Holistic Learning and Meaning) that can use this information to tell stories, make myths and thereby develop meaning and understanding. In today's Information Society we prize those individuals and corporations who can skillfully manipulate data. However, in tomorrow's Dream Society, we will most generously reward those who can use holistic education to make this meaning. The successful student will have learned how to access information. The successful teacher will assist the student in developing the wisdom to use that information in becoming a better human being.

[Review: In many ways this may be seen as just 'wishful thinking' and 'foolishly naive' and I agree. As today all we seem to see is more regimentation more testing more NAPLAN, more categories of integration between learning and the vocations ascribed by the State. Such commodification of learning and vocation has moved apace in the Commonwealth over the past 20years. The local State sanctioned formal structured curriculum has long been in Voc Ed via Competency Based Training (CBT) and now reaches kindergarten and reaches into Tertiary Ed. In Australia and Canada this battle is all but lost]

'World Brain' Tomorrow as 'World Soul'

As we extend the concept of 'World Brain' to 'holistic education' and include the fourth and fifth generations of education we move towards the idea of 'World Mind' and beyond to what Sardello (1995) calls engagement with 'World Soul' or Gaia where 'nature' is ever present and we locate our humanity within this enveloping notion in effect becoming co-artificers. Now we need to touch on its future implementation. This article calls for a form of 'head, hands, heart and help' (4H) approach to the implementation of holistic education. This implies the inclusion of scientia, techne (praxis), gnosis and relatio systems respectively.

Clearly in largely academic, vocational and other educational areas one of these aspects will predominate. What we do maintain is that even in those circumstances doorways and links to these other ways of learning need to be established so the student may open them at a later stage. We strongly believe this 4H approach to the implementation of holistic education renders HG Wells' concept of 'World Brain' and here we move this to 'World Mind' and then 'World Soul' is relevant to ourselves and to our children's generations.

We have workshopped this and related ideas over the past five years it is increasingly obvious that (postgraduate) students are increasingly interested in Education Generations 4 & 5. Often the best that can happen is that the student finds a supervisor with sympathy. This article calls for education systems to go much further than this to transcend education generations 1 to 3 and actively develop learning processes for generations 4 and 5. In this way they will transform themselves and us who work in them.

What we have come to is the question: How does Global Mind connect to Global Soul? And one answer to that may be: By going with our thoughts focussed through our middle eye, to the center of the Universe – or at least half way – 6.5 billion light years – see what is there – and connect that energy back to our now. What you see when you get to the center is going to be different for every one – the Maya tell us to look for the vortex energy contained in the pyramid – the Kaballists tell us to look for the Star of David, I say use the vortex tool represented by the sea shell – all are there – but finding the energy is the exercise and not getting addicted to it. Not only will you discover your Soul but you may also find your g-d self.

[Review – my own praxis: a Canadian colleague (Mitch Gold) and I have sought to crystalise this into what we call Home-planet Virtual University a virtual Learning Enrichment Hub endorsing the ISO 26000 Social Responsibility Standard in the context of co-eldership – see <http://www.homeplanet.org/hvu/> , <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Homeplanet-Virtual-University-HVU/249440435111519> , <http://www.linkedin.com/groups/homeplanet-virtual-university-4111958/>]

Conclusion

This article has sought to examine the emerging possibilities for ‘World Brain’, to interpret its meaning into ‘holistic education’ and thence to ‘World Mind’ thence ‘World Soul’. Our process, while still harnessing the power of the internet, is a positive alternative to a limited techno utopian Transhuman to become a more fully realized transformed human.

Finally, the article proposes implementation through ‘Hubs of Holistic Learning and Meaning’ and the use of new Thinking Tools that reflect the latest understanding as shared by the Maya Elders recognizing the importance to our common persona the qualities of Time and Space

It is in such Hubs that relational learning can emerge, generating meaning through linking people, places and the planet. In this way, it may be possible for the broad educational sector to contribute to the modern day emergence of HG Wells’ ‘World Brain. *[Review: even as we face the tragedies of our global commons we see all around us today, engage the potentials of our future society in a way such that ‘we can demonstrate practically, through LEH’s , today that a better world is possible tomorrow for our children and planet’. I hope so for in another 20 years it will all be too late]*

* In this article organisation is used in the generic sense of corporation or community

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¹ Review: an Australian colleague Ross Welch has developed substantive action-learning materials for eldership and v-University refers to Homeplanet Virtual University co-developed with Mitch Gold <http://www.homeplanet.org/hvu/>.